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A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY IN INDIVIDUAL TEACHER AND GROUP DECISION-MAKING WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO ONE SCHOOL'S SELECTION OF CURRICULUM RESOURCE MATERIALS

By

JOANNE CHRISTINE TRANTER

©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1996

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *A Study of the Role of Educational Philosophy in Individual Teacher and Group Decision-Making With Particular Reference to One School's Selection of Curriculum Resource Materials* submitted by Joanne Christine Tranter in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dr. D. Sande

Dr. D. Oberg

Dr. J. Ellis

Dr. T. Kieren

Dr. G. Fenstermacher

March 12, 1996

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family,
with love and gratitude for their
continuing support and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research was to conduct a case study of one local school staff's process for selecting curriculum resource materials for the following school year, and to examine the role of educational philosophy in the decision making process. This was undertaken at a point in the school year (April, May, and June) when teaching staffs are typically engaged in choosing curriculum resource materials for the coming September.

Repertory grid analyses (personal construct theory) and interviews (hermeneutical inquiry) were conducted with four individual teachers to explore their individual educational philosophies and practices in relation to the school's collective educational philosophy. Interviews with the principal and curriculum coordinator were also conducted, and the staff as a whole was invited to respond to four open ended survey questions. The researcher acted as an observer in staff meetings and as a participant observer (ethnography) in a meeting of the school's primary team as they planned their final unit for the school year. Additional school documents were also used as sources of data.

The findings of the research are categorized under four major themes: *curriculum resource materials reflecting educational philosophy, the interconnectedness of educational philosophy, group and philosophical maturation,* and *cultural leadership.*

Three primary conclusions were drawn. Firstly, educational philosophy holds a significant position in the foreground of this school's daily life. It is seen as being integral to practice (including the selection of curriculum resource materials), and to the culture of the school. Secondly, it provides the "why" behind educational action, guiding the "how" while lending coherence to overall practice within the school. Thirdly, educational philosophy has been carefully woven into the cultural fabric of the school, having been blended with practices, manifestations of the school culture, vision, and history of the school.

PREFACE

Children will see themselves as lifelong learners and
experience a sense of joy, wonder, and hope.
They will risk, grow, express, and explore
while encountering success on their journey;
becoming thoughtful, responsible contributors to their world.
Students, staff, parents and community will learn
together creating a caring environment which offers
children opportunities to think logically, creatively,
critically, and socially. At Bisset, we
believe that each child is a valuable
member of society.

(Bisset School Philosophy)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With heartfelt thanks to the staff and administration
of Bisset School who so generously shared their world.

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Chapter 1

SHAPING THE INQUIRY

All educational issues are ultimately philosophical
(Shermis, 1967: p.10).

Educators must realize that all educational practices are built upon assumptions rooted in philosophy, and that different philosophic starting points may lead to varying educational practices
(Knight, 1989: p.40).

Research Questions

While browsing in a local "teacher store", I could not help but notice the veritable smorgasbord of curriculum resource materials that were available to educators. This multimillion dollar industry produces books, posters, bulletin board borders, stamps, erasers, endless supplies of stickers; all aimed at helping us to do a better, more colourful and efficient job of educating children.

With educational dollars shrinking and demands on teachers' stamina, skills, and general flexibility ever expanding, there is little wonder that educators are lured into the marketing web that seems to promise a teaching panacea. Massive display areas at teachers' conventions, stores dedicated solely to the sale of commercially produced resource materials, and sales representatives from a growing number of educational publishing firms all provide us with more resources than could ever be utilized in an educator's professional lifetime.

But, faced with such a range, where to begin? How does one choose? Like a carpenter choosing the right tool for a specific task, educators must select the most appropriate resource to achieve the most effective teaching and learning situation.

Using a wrist watch, I informally clocked a variety of colleagues during a shopping moment at a downtown educational store. I was intrigued to note that some teachers took several minutes to browse through a resource before adding it to their baskets, while others took less than a minute. Forty two seconds, thirty four seconds, and a mere seven

seconds were calculated for three separate purchases. I could not help but wonder how these people were so aptly able to identify materials which logically were intended to fill some need in their classrooms. For that matter, how did any teacher know which curriculum resource materials to choose for any given purpose? On what basis were these decisions made?

These questions regarding teachers' thinking about choosing resources were the foundation for the formulation of the research questions for this dissertation.

1. **By what decision making process does one school select curriculum resource materials? Of what significance is this process?**

2. **What is the principal's perception of his or her role in developing, adapting, and maintaining the school staff's group philosophy of education?**

3. **What can be learned about individual teachers' thinking through a discussion of the criteria they use to select curriculum resource materials?**

4. **What factors do teachers see as supporting or inhibiting the development of their individual educational philosophies?**

5. **What can be learned about the culture of a school by examining curriculum resource materials as artifacts of that culture?**

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research was to conduct a case study of one school staff's process for selecting curriculum resource materials for the following school year, and to study the role of educational philosophy in the decision making process.

Assumptions

There are five assumptions underlying this research.

1. In varying degrees of consciousness, all teachers have an educational philosophy. This educational philosophy stems from their broader life philosophies which they possess by virtue of the fact that they are human beings whose axiological, ontological, and epistemological orientations are shaped by their life experiences

(Knight, 1989). Educational philosophy encompasses beliefs about the nature and purpose of students' learning, the curriculum, and the effectiveness of particular teaching strategies.

2. All teachers use their educational philosophies (more or less consciously) to make a variety of practical teaching decisions.
3. There are conditions which support the deliberate, conscious development of individual teachers' explicit educational philosophies.
4. There are conditions which discourage or inhibit the deliberate, conscious development of individual teachers' explicit educational philosophies.
5. Some teachers have a more developed (deliberate and explicit) educational philosophy than others.

Parameters of the Study

Delimitations. The scope of the study was limited to a single case. However, it should be noted that the intent in utilizing one site for study was not to generalize the findings to the entire educational community. Rather, it was to generalize the findings to a theoretical proposition and its antithesis; namely that educational philosophy plays a role integral in teachers' choices of curriculum resource materials or that educational philosophy is irrelevant to the selection process.

Secondly, while educational philosophy encompasses beliefs about several aspects of educational practice, the breadth of this research was confined to examining the process of selecting curriculum resource materials. Following the theory that there are internal consistencies within an educational philosophy, it seemed likely that information about an individual teacher's thinking regarding choices of curriculum resource materials would potentially reveal clues about that individual's broader educational philosophy.

The process of selecting resources is an everyday, common activity for most teachers. The development of a progress reporting format for a school or a school policy governing the organization of a school are examples of activities that represent long range planning and implementation. As such, they represent relatively rare instances for indepth study.

In addition, they tend to be more controversial processes than are choices of resource materials.

Finally, restricting the study to curriculum resource materials provided a concrete basis for much of the initial discussion with the teachers. As educational philosophy tends to be an implicit and abstract concept to many educators, having tangible artifacts deliberately included in the interview process was intended to promote dialogue.

Limitations. Although the entire faculty of the research site were involved in whole staff discussions during staff meetings that were observed, only six staff members volunteered for individual interviews. Because of the size of the staff (19 teachers at the time of the study), it was not practical to work on a one-to-one basis with everyone. However, it should be noted that all staff were aware that they could volunteer or decline to increase their participation at any point in the research process. An invitation was extended to all staff to take part in a survey later in the study, and the researcher sought feedback from the whole staff before drawing final conclusions about the findings.

Terminology

There exists a multiplicity of definitions for the term *educational philosophy* in the research literature. However, in view of the scope of this report, the definition selected by this researcher is as follows:

> *What is considered by an individual or group of individuals to be pedagogically and ethically valid (good, real, and true) about teaching and learning, arising from broader life philosophy. As such, it provides the parameters for preferred educational action. The development of educational philosophy is unending, and educators vary in their levels of philosophic maturation.*
>
> *A more evolved educational philosophy represents a constellation of critically examined beliefs about: the purpose of education, curriculum, assessment and the reporting of student progress, instruction and the role of the teacher, learning and the role of the learner, the role of parents, organization of the school, and curriculum resource materials. As a developed entity, it is a coherent whole, and within that whole there are internal consistencies.*

The development of this definition was influenced by the perspectives of Armstrong (1989), Knight (1989), Kreeft (1984), Meighen (1981), and Zais (1976). The division of educational philosophy into these eight discrete areas is recognized to be somewhat arbitrary as in reality they are considerably interrelated. However, temporary isolation of these eight pieces from the educational philosophy as a whole assists in identifying the make up of an educational philosophy and facilitates discussion.

Significance of the Study

Recent changes to the Alberta educational system have included a shift towards a site-based models as opposed to a more central management plan. That a group (school) philosophy be developed and utilized as the touchstone for decision making processes within the school is a fundamental tenet of the site-based management strategy. As noted by the National School Public Relations Association in their handbook on site-based management, *shared values are even more important in a system of cooperative decision making* (1989, p.35). Therefore, the study of the role of philosophy with regard to one type of decision making (the selection of curriculum resource materials) is timely.

Another recent change to the provincial educational system is the introduction of charter schools. Current legislation allows for the development of such alternative schools if the proposed focus of the charter school is shown to fulfil specific needs of Alberta parents and children that cannot otherwise be satisfied in the public system. Plans for charter schools that are submitted to the Minister for Education for consideration must include a statement of beliefs (a school philosophy).

> *The philosophy, purpose and goals form the basis of a charter school. They give life to the school and the basis for educational decision making and evaluation of results* (p.8 of the *Charter School Handbook*, 1994).

Screening processes regarding access to a charter school are to be grounded in the school's educational philosophy.

In addition, much discussion surrounding the introduction of charter schools has had a philosophical undercurrent. That is, the suggestion that charter schools with a more "back to the basics" perspective would be preferable to more inquiry based or hands-on

orientations that are prevalent in many public schools has been at the heart of much of public debate on the issue.

Such discussion about what constitutes a "good education" has also led to the phenomenon of parents "shopping around" for the "right school" for their child. No longer is it assumed that the community school will be the natural choice for attendance. During this process of school scouting, curriculum resource materials are tangible artifacts that prospective parents can use to glean more information about the alignment of the school. For example, we can read concern for the basics in the lay question, "Where are the spellers?"

The articulation and implementation of a collective (group) educational philosophy is an attribute of effective and successful schools. That the belief system of the staff within a school is significant presupposes that the individual has a level of awareness and understanding of their own educational beliefs. There are also indications that leaders who are able to bring about change and innovative developments in their schools accomplish this by "tapping into" individual educational philosophies.

Finally, the reality of funding cutbacks to the educational system have forced both policymakers and practitioners to rethink the issue of expenditures; including the purchases of curriculum resource materials. What are the criteria for making choices? Does educational philosophy play a role in these decisions? Or is educational philosophy, as some educators would propose, simply a theoretical construct devoid of pragmatic application? These questions are central concerns in this study.

Chapter 2

INITIAL CONNECTIONS WITH THE LITERATURE

It is clear that there should be some legislation about education and that it should be conducted on a public system. But consideration must be given to the question, what constitutes education and what is the proper way to be educated? At present there are differences of opinion as to the proper tasks to be set; for all peoples do not agree as to the things that the young ought to learn, either with a view to virtue or with a view to the best life, nor is it clear whether their studies should be regulated more with regard to intellect or with regard to character. And confusing questions arise out of the education that actually prevails, and it is not at all clear whether the pupils should practice pursuits that are practically useful, or morally edifying, or higher accomplishments - for all these views have won the support of some judges; and nothing is agreed as regards the exercise conducive to virtue, for, to start with, all men do not honour the same virtue, so that they naturally hold different opinions in regard to training in virtue
(Aristotle: Politics VII.2).

The students are alive, and the purpose of education is to stimulate and guide their self-development. It follows as a corollary from this premise, that the teachers also should be alive with living thoughts...The reason is that we are dealing with human minds, and not with dead matter
(Whitehead, 1957: p.v & 5).

Introduction to the Initial Literature

A synthesis of the research literature indicates that educational philosophy can be described as existing on three planes: as a foundation of curriculum studies, at the individual level, or as a group construct. While this orientation implies that educational philosophy lives in both the macro and micro domains, it does not suggest that these perspectives are separate and discrete. Rather, educational philosophy as a foundation will extend to the broader beliefs of society and provincial curriculum developers which will overlap with educational philosophies at the district and school levels. In turn, the philosophical alignments of these institutions will either be in harmony or at odds with the educational philosophies of individual teachers. Like the Russian wooden dolls that nestle inside one another, the face of educational philosophy may remain the same as we

work our way through the layers to the individual; or it may take on a completely different appearance. When such a "stranger" is introduced into the whole, discord can result.

This chapter examines more fully educational philosophy as a foundation, and at the individual and group levels. Educational philosophy in relation to curriculum resource materials and to reflective practice, and research on the connection between educational philosophy and the selection of curriculum resource materialse are also explored.

Educational Philosophy as a Curriculum Foundation

Curriculum foundations can be thought of as,

> *...those basic forces that influence and shape the content and organization of the curriculum* (Zais, 1976: p.15).

Thus, these foundational disciplines set the parameters for curriculum development.

Cook and Doll (1973) stressed the importance of philosophy as a foundation in curriculum development work.

> *Philosophy is one of the most important curriculum foundations, and the philosophy accepted by the curriculum worker* (or developer at the policy making level) *often determines his reactions to all other factors influencing content and organization* (p.31).

Further to this, in his work *Realms of Meaning*, Phenix (1964), described the importance of educational philosophy to curriculum development.

> *...philosophy of the curriculum is necessary. By such a philosophy is meant a critically examined, coherent system of ideas by which all the constituent parts of the course of instruction are identified and ordered* (p.13).

That the work of curriculum designing must consider educational philosophy is a point of agreement by many others within the curriculum writing field (Behar, 1994; Carr & Harris, 1993; English, 1992; Gatherer, 1989; Holmes & McLean, 1989; Lewy, 1991; Mueller, 1991; Overgaard, 1990; Paris, 1993).

Longstreet & Shane (1993) delineated the connection between educational philosophy and curriculum design.

> *In the best of all logical worlds, each curriculum design would be a clear reflection of a philosophical perspective* (p. 118).

According to Miller and Seller (1985) and Ornstein and Hunkins (1988), there are four major foundations of curriculum: philosophy, history, psychology, and sociology. Philosophy in this context is defined as follows.

> *Philosophy deals with the larger aspects of life, the problems and prospects of living, and the way we organize our thoughts and facts. It is an effort to see life and its problems in full perspective. It requires looking beyond the immediate to causes and relationships and to future developments* (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988: p.25).

Schubert (1986) expands on the significance of philosophy as a curricular foundation:

> *Philosophy lies at the heart of educational endeavour. This is perhaps most evident in the curriculum domain than in any other, for curriculum is a response to the question of how to live a good life. The latter is presupposed when we ask what is worthwhile to know or experience. What is the reason for knowing or experiencing something, if it is not to live a better life?...This idea implies that the worth of philosophical inquiry is determined by the human growth or education that accrues from it* (p.116).

Within the curriculum foundations, there are four major educational philosophies that have emerged from within the North American teaching tradition: perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism (Armstrong, 1989; Longstreet & Shane, 1993; Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988). Curriculum theorists differentiate between these four educational philosophies by using a variety of criteria which can be classified as ontological, axiological, or epistemological in nature (Print, 1987).

As a function of philosophy, ontological questions focus on reality; *what is real?* Perceptions of the role of education, views of the roles of teacher and students, theories of organization of learning situations, and convictions regarding assessment practices are examples of ontological considerations.

Axiology, as one of the three parts of philosophy, challenges us to consider the question, *what is good?* This branch of philosophy is concerned with what is of value. Curricular emphasis, perspectives on theories of instructional practices and resources are areas that fall under the umbrella of axiology.

The underlying question of epistemology is, *what is true?* As the third part of philosophy as it is viewed in this paper, epistemological criteria focus on theories of knowledge. According to Zais (1976), epistemology is,

> *...that area of philosophy which is of special concern to curriculum specialists* (p.103).

Epistemological inquiry forces us to consider the basic curriculum query, "What knowledge is of most worth?"

The responses to these three questions in respect to educational philosophy will determine the nature and substance of the curriculum.

> *Curriculum objectives and content will vary considerably depending, for example, upon whether one believes that 'true' knowledge exists out there in the 'real' world or whether 'true' knowledge is located internally, within the subjective recesses of the individual mind* (Zais, 1976: p.15).

The matrix on the following page outlines some key ontological, axiological, and epistemological distinctions between perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism (Table 1, *Matrix of Criteria for Differentiating Between Major Educational Philosophies Within Curriculum Studies*).

Following are more detailed descriptions of these four major educational philosophies within the context of curriculum foundations. Ontological, axiological, and epistemological similarities and differences become more apparent through this discussion.

Perennialism. Perennialism, as an educational philosophy, finds its roots in the broader philosophy of *realism* (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988). Realism was first developed in Ancient Greece by the philosopher Aristotle. The ability to reason and to come to know the world through logical thought are cornerstones of this world perspective. Abstract notions are seen as being superior to concrete experience, as the mind is viewed as existing separately from the rest of the body. Knowledge is viewed as being absolute and permanent.The basis of reality and truth is found in the natural sciences and within the arts (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988).

As an educational philosophy, perennialism puts the theory of realism into instructional practice. It is the oldest and most conservative of the four educational

TABLE 1
MATRIX OF CRITERIA FOR DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN MAJOR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES WITHIN CURRICULUM STUDIES

Major Educational Philosophies

	Perennialism	Essentialism	Progressivism	Reconstructionism
Ontological Considerations	• purpose of education is to improve man • teacher viewed as subject area expert, authority figure; formal tutor • student developmental level and interests are irrelevant to learning; learning need not be pleasurable; student is generally passive recipient of knowledge • organizational structure of the school maintains that failing students is an acceptable practice; competitive • results of regular testing determine student achievement and academic standing	• purpose of education is to provide a basic education to all while maintaining the status quo; demanding academic exercise • teacher viewed as content expert and citizenship model • student interests and needs are immaterial; society's needs and interests supersede • student ability determines depth of learning; strongest students go beyond "basics" • organizational structure of the school maintains that failing students is an acceptable practice • results of regular testing determine student achievement in relation to rigorous benchmarks; formal testing	• purpose of education is to prepare students for their futures; includes fostering of critical and reflective thought • teacher is facilitator or guide • child-centred orientation based on knowledge of child development; students viewed as unique individuals; students' background experiences, interests, and needs form basis for planning • schools organized on a continuous progress plan which allows students to progress at their own rates • products and processes and demonstrations of learning are chief assessment strategies	• purpose of education is to build a better future world; to bring about change; critical thinking is encouraged; focus on common good • teacher is liaison with community; facilitator, catalyst to change; philosopher • focus on whole child; emphasis on teaching students to effect and manage change • school organization centers on notion of school as part of the community; segregation by grade levels not advocated • assessment strategies flexible (oral, written, actual performance); context specific
Axiological Considerations	• curricular emphasis is on classical studies, reason and logical thinking; abstract thought is superior to concrete experience; nonvocational, academic • drill, lecture, mentoring, and Socratic questioning are major teaching strategies • classical literature and works of the past are key resources; second-hand experience valued much more than hands-on experience; restricted resources	• curricular emphasis is on "basics" (reading, writing, math, grammar, history, science); vocational • homework, drill, and demanding academic exercises are key teaching strategies • traditional textbooks are primary resources; vocational materials	• curricular emphasis on problem solving, scientific inquiry, collaboration, self control, and citizenship within democracy • hands-on discovery learning, active participation, projects based on student interests and needs and cooperative group work are key teaching strategies • resources include people, books, A.V. aids; extensive and diverse	• curricular emphasis on student experiences and relevant social issues; curriculum specific to community context; vocational • preplanned curriculum executed through much hands-on experience (ideally in the community) • resources include books, hands-on materials, and people
Epistemological Considerations	• knowledge is absolute and permanent and should be separated into subject areas • truth is found in natural sciences and the arts	• time-tested knowledge that has proven its worth to society is most valuable; should be practical, specific, and basic; should be linked to work world • subject areas should remain separated	• knowledge viewed as being dynamic; subject area content should be integrated	• knowledge is dynamic; stress on that which is most relevant to the social situation of the community; integration of subject areas desirable

philosophies (perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism). Those who believe in this philosophy consider that,

> *...the sole purpose of education is the cultivation of mind through the study of permanent truths to be found in the classical studies* (Tanner & Tanner, 1990: p. 330).

The intent of the basic twelve year, North American liberal education was described by Robert Hutchins (1953), a major twentieth century influence within the perennialist camp.

> *The aim of the educational system is the same in every age and in every society where such a system can exist; it is to improve man as man* (p.68).

In a second quote, Hutchins (1963) noted that, *It is an education calculated to develop the mind* (p.1). Coupled with this goal is the perspective that content is a means to the ultimate end of cultivating the mind so as to ameliorate the human condition.

The emphasis of perennialism is on information and values that have remained constant, such as those found in classical literature. Since only the past remains unchanging, it is necessary for this philosophy to rely almost exclusively on the historical. Essentially, it is believed that the ability to challenge the future is found in understanding the past.

Curricular content focuses on classical disciplines of study. This again depends on the notion that there are permanent truths. Subject areas include languages, literature, fine arts, mathematics, natural sciences, history, and geography (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988). It should be noted that the natural sciences figure prominently, while modern technologically oriented sciences are not considered valid curricular content. This is due to the modern scientific view that knowledge is ever changing and evolving; a concept that is at odds with the idea of permanent truths.

Further to this, perennialists hold that knowledge should be compartmentalized into separate subjects, never blended into a cross curricular format. Optional programming is very limited under the perennialist plan. Vocational and contemporary syllabi are shunned, recalling the stances of Plato and Aristotle who believed that, *...rational knowledge is derived from a higher source than experience...*(Tanner & Tanner, 1990: p. 335). This statement also minimizes the value of hands-on, experiential learning.

In addition to academic training, perennialists believe that, *Character training is also important as a means of developing one's moral and spiritual being* (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988: p. 33). Understanding human nature and the maturation of character are also key curricular concepts.

Perennialists are dubious of the notion of "new problems"; rather, they believe in the historical recurrence of a limited number of old themes that present themselves in new forms (Armstrong, 1989). This perspective reinforces the need to look to the past.

That there are truths that are fixed and basic is a cornerstone belief of perennialism as an educational philosophy. This thinking pervades the choice of curriculum resources that are employed to help educate the student. The "Great Books" (Hutchins, 1963) are greatly encouraged, with the works of such men as Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus, and Shakespeare being deemed as appropriate texts (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988). Furthermore, to be literate in most of these works as they were originally penned (excluding Shakespeare) traditionally required the learning of both Latin and Greek languages.

The function of the perennialist teacher is to prepare students by ensuring that they have a solid foundation in these *basic human truths* (Armstrong, 1989: p.11). The teacher is seen as subject expert whose role is to facilitate discussion; to evoke the development of rational thinking. According to Adler (1982), the

> *...art of the teacher depends on the teacher's understanding of how the mind learns by the exercise of its own powers* (p.61).

Within the perennialist perspective, the student mind is viewed as an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge. Individual differences amongst students lie in the capacity of the vessel. Therefore, a common, one track curriculum for all is offered, with quantity as opposed to quality of education being the variable (Tanner & Tanner, 1990). It is this common curriculum that constitutes educational equality for all students. For most students, a mastery of the minimum requirements of a basic perennialist education should suffice.

The developmental stage of the learner is not a factor for consideration, other than as a potential roadblock.

> *Youth itself is the most serious impediment - in fact, youth is an insuperable obstacle to being an educated person* (Adler, 1982: p. 53).

Within this system of beliefs, student interests are also viewed as irrelevant for learning.

Following this outlook on the student, perennialists do not view learning as a necessarily pleasurable experience; much like the old physical fitness adage, "No pain, no gain". As Theodore Sizer (1984) expanded,

> *There is hurt in learning, and it is difficult to persuade someone to hurt himself* (p.89).

Drill as an instructional strategy flows naturally from this conviction, as do rigorous academic benchmarks. Regular testing determines the standing of the individual student.

Perennialism was the most popular and predominant educational philosophy to the time of the onset of the 20th century. Although it waned in the early 1900's, it has continued to resurface and gain momentum and credibility whenever the current educational system is under attack by the general public.

One present day apostle of perennialism is Mortimer Adler. In 1982, Adler published the *Paideia Proposal*; the Greek term *paideia* meaning *bringing up of the child.* Adler postulated that three classifications of instruction should be employed: lecturing, mentoring or coaching, and the Socratic method of questioning to instill an understanding of broader values. Sharpes (1988) described this instructional strategy as follows:

> *The methodological principle of Greek philosophy was a questioning strategy, a dialogue between two or more people* (p.20).

Thus, knowledge, ideas, and values formed the foundations of Adler's perennialist classroom.

While Adler's work has been influential in some educational circles, perennialism has not been a dominant philosophical force in recent times.

Essentialism. Historically, this educational philosophy has had the greatest degree of influence in the North American educational system (Armstrong, 1989). Wingo (1974) expanded on this concept.

> *Essentialism is the dominant educational tradition in America and it always has been; certainly this is true in practical matters of operation in*

> *our schools. This means that essentialism is more that a related group of abstract ideas about education; it is a living body of school practices* (p.62).

Founded jointly in the broader philosophies of realism and idealism (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988), essentialism has frequently been referred to as a "back to the basics" or "3 R's" movement (Tanner & Tanner, 1990). William Bagley of the Teachers College of Columbia University is credited with having formalized the essentialist perspective.

Surfacing in the 1930's, late 1950's and early 1960's, and reemerging in the 1980's, essentialism's initial evolution as an educational philosophy parallelled massive immigrations to North America. Its intent was to provide a basic education to the offspring of the working masses, focusing on reading, writing, and arithmetic. Bernal (1971) noted that the

> *...new working class needed enough acquaintance with the three R's to do their jobs properly, and provision for teaching them was reluctantly provided on the cheapest basis. But there was all the more reason for seeing that the education of the masses did not go too far, and that it introduced no unsettling ideas* (p.1149).

Thus, the original function of an essentialist education was to provide the future work force with literacy and other necessary skills in order that they could make contributions to the developing economy. Critical thinking was not encouraged.

Differing from the perennialist perspective, essentialism does not hold knowledge as absolute, but instead relies on *time-tested content that has proved its worth to society* (Longstreet & Shane, 1993: p.112). A belief in practical, specific, and basic knowledge that links learning to the work world tends to provide a business oriented content in the essentialist curriculum; the arts and humanities being downplayed as secondary in importance (Armstrong, 1989). Fundamental facts are used to formulate theories and concepts, and the subjects of reading, mathematics, writing (including spelling and grammar), (European and/or North American) history, and science form the curricular basis (McNeil, 1985). More recently, computer skills have been added as an essentialist "basic".

In addition to focusing on passing on knowledge and skills to the upcoming

generations, a major goal of essentialist education is to maintain the societal stability or the status quo (Holmes & McLean, 1989). While social, political, and economic progress is not necessarily overtly impeded under this orientation, *...the role of education is to preserve, conserve, cherish and transmit our cultural heritage* (Reynolds, 1989: p.117). Change is expected to occur in a logical and restrained way that builds upon current foundations laid by existing institutions and structures. This establishment exists and is maintained because it is inherently just and respectable.

While the fundamental purpose of essentialism is rigorous academic exercise (Wingo, 1974), the belief that the physical and emotional health of children should be furthered in the classroom also pervades this educational orientation. The concept of life long learning is an essentialist ideal that flows from this tenet regarding health (Reynolds, 1989). This idea considering well-being is labelled the "learning society" in *A Nation at Risk* (1983), one of the most renowned contemporary essentialist documents.

The rise of essentialism often occurs when public education is under attack. Sometimes seen as a kind of aspirin for educational ills, its popularity may coincide with times of economic restraint. With the doing away of such "frills" as the fine arts, it has great political potential.

The previous essentialist era occurring in the late 1950's and early 1960's parallelled the launch of Sputnik and the dawn of the space race between the United States and the former Soviet Union. Two major proponents of essentialist education of that time included Arthur Bestor (*Educational Wastelands: The Retreat From Learning in Our Public Schools [1953]*) and Hyman George Rickover (*Education and Freedom [1959]* and *American Education - a National Failure: The Problem of Our Schools and What We Can Learn From England [1963]*).

Bestor's beliefs about the role of schools and the means to achieve productive ends can be summarized in his statement,

> *The nation depends on its schools and colleges to furnish this intellectual training to its citizenry as a whole. Society has no other institutions upon which it can rely in this matter. If schools and colleges do not emphasize rigorous intellectual training, there will be none* (1953, p.14).

Rickover also echoed many of the sentiments of the essentialist movement in 1963.

> *Bright people whose mental powers have been developed through rigorous academic education have it in them to contribute enormously to society. A country that succeeded in providing every child with the requisite talent to pursue an academic education would not only enhance public well-being but would excel in most areas that affect a nation's position in the world* (p.153).

The influence of these two men during their time and long after is undeniable. Three decades later, the voices of Bestor and Rickover would seem to reverberate in the text of *A Nation at Risk.*

Similar to the perennialist teacher, essentialist educators are seen as content experts and models of citizenship who explicitly and by example transmit traditional values to students (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988).

A hierarchical class structure is embedded and legitimated within essentialist education. Inequalities amongst students are a function of genetics or other biological factors. *For all children, the educational process must be one of collecting factual knowledge to the limit of their absorptive capacity* (Rickover, 1958: p.61). Quantity and rate of learning, therefore, are viewed as variable, and depth of learning is determined by student ability.

While a common curriculum exists for all, latitude must be given, particularly to the gifted student. In a kind of educational Darwinism, the strongest and best students traditionally will be encouraged to strive and grow beyond mastery of basics.

Like the perennialist perspective, essentialism does not view student interests or social issues as being pertinent to curriculum. Homework, drill, and rigorous academic exercise are hallmarks of this philosophy in practice. *The student must be made to work hard...nothing can really make it fun* (Rickover, 1958: p.61). Testing is a legitimate and necessary way to determine the degree to which students have learned, and the practice of retention or "failing" is viewed as reasonable.

The high profile of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) was largely responsible for the most recent return of the philosophy of essentialism to the educational spotlight. However,

essentialism in the 1980's and 1990's has altered slightly in its practices. Making provision for less academically talented students is one area of moderation. But, it has also shifted from an emphasis on minimum competence to one of increased achievement. This excellence versus adequacy alteration is in line with global economic competition. Like the last great period of essentialism in the late 1950's and early 1960's when we competed against the U.S.S.R., attempts are being made to compare North American student achievement with that in Japan, Germany, and other countries. Themes of competition and survival in the international marketplace pervade newspapers, business reports, and educational journals. Schools are being viewed as pipelines to national economic prosperity as well as international political power (Walberg, 1983).

Progressivism. This educational perspective finds its origins in the wider philosophy of pragmatism (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988). Progressivism evolved largely as a backlash against perennialist paradigms and practices, refuting the image of the authoritarian teacher, the reliance on the "Great Books" of the past, the view of students' interests and developmental needs as irrelevant, and the notion of fixed or permanent knowledge. An awareness of change and preparation for students' futures are hallmarks of progressive philosophy.

> *The progressive sees humanity in an evolving universe. Hence knowledge is not static or timeless but dynamic. Education must be viewed as a process of growth, and not merely a process of cultural transmission. Mind is viewed in biological continuity with nature, not a thing apart. The nature and interests of the learner and social conditions, as well as the race experience, must be considered in developing a balanced and coherent curriculum* (Tanner, 1980: p.61).

Its formal beginnings as an educational philosophy in the mid 1920's mirrored larger social, political, and economic changes in North American society.

Although John Dewey (1859-1952) is most often credited with fathering progressive practices, it was in fact the earlier work of Horace Mann and Henry Barnard in the late 1800's that formed the initial foundations for progressivism (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988). The pioneering ideas and writings of these two men strongly influenced Dewey in his early career.

John Dewey's 1916 publication Democracy and Education outlined many of the crucial elements of progressivism in its infancy. As the title suggests, the primacy of democracy to education was a fundamental principle.

> *A tenet of Progressivism is that the schools become major societal institutions assigned the tasks of not only propagating, but also improving, the way of life in society. To this end, the progressive school is deemed a working model of democracy. Freedom is explicit in democracy, so freedom must be explicit in our schools...Organized freedom permits each member of the society (school) to share in the making of decisions. Experiences must be shared by all in order to assure meaningful decision making* (Rubin, 1977: p.398).

Dewey perceived that the beliefs and conventions associated with democracy could be successfully transplanted to a school setting. To him, this was a necessary step in helping students develop positive citizenship and problem solving skills.

Problem solving and scientific inquiry are focal skills in the student-centred progressivist curriculum. Collaborative skills and self control are additional primary goals. As Wiles & Bondi (1989) noted, *Such an education program would focus on value development, but in terms of group consequences* (p.50). Hands-on, active participation and projects integrating subject areas are key teaching strategies. Specific topics for study are selected from students' interests and concerns, with relevancy to life being a major criterion for these choices. Logically, then, the social sciences often receive curricular emphasis (Armstrong, 1989).

Differing from perennialism and essentialism, progressivism places an emphasis on process skills as opposed to strictly memorizing content. That is, students are taught <u>how</u> to think as opposed to <u>what</u> to think (Rubin, 1977). Often the process of doing and learning is seen as more valuable than the final product. Critical and reflective thought are encouraged (Cook & Doll, 1973).

Curriculum resource materials include more than textbooks, and progressivists have been careful not to replicate more conservative reliance on works of the past. Human resources, including adults in real world work place contexts, have acted as role models and mentors. Students themselves, with their varied backgrounds and experiences, are frequently viewed as a kind of resource. The hands-on orientation requires a variety of

materials, both natural and man made. As visual and auditory media technologies have expanded, filmstrips, videos, movies, and other recordings have become components of progressive curriculum resource stocks.

The role of the progressive teacher is more one of facilitator or guide.

> *The teacher is not to be a dispenser of facts, but a moderator or leader. He is not a promoter of a point of view. To the pragmatist, teaching is more exploratory than explanatory* (Cook & Doll, 1973: p.43).

Extensive preplanning of specific lessons is not characteristic of these educators. Rather, flexibility and the attitude and aptitude to be able to respond to students' needs and interests are of greater importance and value.

While traditional paper and pencil testing is not necessarily eliminated in progressivist classrooms, there is a greater emphasis on student demonstrations of learning. Products and the processes used to arrive at these results are often seen as having greater assessment significance.

The progressive view of the child as a unique individual stands in marked contrast to perennialist or essentialist beliefs. That theories of child development and the needs and interests of children be the basis for designing curricular activities was a novel concept when this philosophy began to be implemented (Holmes & McLean, 1989). Shepherd & Ragan (1992) elaborated on the implications of such child-centredness.

> *The idea that teachers should begin where the children are was certainly implicit in Dewey's teaching. Dewey subscribed to the premise that the primary source of teaching methods is the child's interests and development, not subject matter or society's interests. The modern version of this part of his pedagogical creed is, of course, the philosophy of continuous growth, which holds that each child should be assisted in growing according to his nature design, without depriving the bright child of the opportunity of accomplishing as much as ability and effort will permit, or forcing the slow child to live up to unattainable standards* (p.27).

Thus, individualized instruction and student choices regarding optional or elective courses were to become instructional features of progressivism.

Much time and debate have been devoted to the topic of more traditional educational philosophies of curriculum (perennialism, and more recently, essentialism) versus

progressive convictions and conventions. Dewey himself dismissed such argument as unproductive. The fact that progressivism had evolved as an alternative to more established educational paradigms was, to his mind, sufficient. However, Dewey was critical of those who sported mistaken or misguided notions about basic progressive ideals; specifically in relation to perceptions of children and their needs for freedom.

> *...Dewey claimed, rather than emphasizing an interaction between the child and the environment, progressives too often merely romanticized the child and succumbed to the child's impulses and wishes* (Miller & Seller, 1985: p.66).

These difficulties have not gone unnoticed by taxpayers.

Public perceptions of progressive education have been varied, and at times, the thrust of this foundational philosophy has been completely misunderstood. Popular literary works including *To Kill a Mockingbird* echo some of these lay misinterpretations.

> *Our teacher says Miss Caroline is introducing a new way of teaching. She learned about it in college. It'll be in all the grades soon. You don't have to learn much out of books that way - it's like if you wanta learn about cows, you go milk one, see?...It's the Dewey Decimal System* (p.23).

> *The remainder of my schooldays were no more auspicious than the first. Indeed, they were an endless Project that slowly evolved into a Unit, in which miles of construction paper and wax crayon were expended by the State of Alabama in its well-meaning but fruitless efforts to teach me Group Dynamics* (Lee, 1960: p.37).

The reader senses the effort that this fictitious child exerts in order to endure the teacher's misunderstandings of the practical implementation of progressivism as an educational philosophy. That it can be challenging to implement progressive ideals <u>well</u> has no doubt been a factor that has contributed to this educational philosophy's reputation.

Progressive education has perhaps been the most vehemently attacked foundational philosophy; due in part to such misconceptions and misrepresentations. There has been a pattern of criticism of progressivism during times of fiscal restraint. Such outcry has typically been followed by a shift to more essentialist practices.

Reconstructionism. Pragmatism is the philosophical footing for the educational philosophy of reconstructionism (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988). Its purpose is to explore

societal issues that affect students as members of society in order that they may build a better future world.

> *Social reconstructionists are interested in the relation between curriculum and the social, political, and economic development of society. Optimistic social reconstructionists are convinced that education can effect social change, citing, for example, literacy campaigns that have contributed to successful political revolutions...They consider the curriculum to be a vehicle for fostering social discontent. They want learners to understand how the curriculum is used to consolidate power and to define society* (McNeil, 1985: p. 25).

Therefore, the hope that change can be safely and effectively achieved through education is basic. Equality of education and opportunity are major elements of reconstructionism, as is active learning. While contemporary issues may dominate the curriculum, a concern for bettering the world for the future is also central. This perspective has often been labelled "utopian" (Longstreet & Shane, 1993).

The first waves of reconstructionism followed on the heels of the Great Depression of the 1930's (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988) when demands for social reform were high. Social and racial discrimination, high unemployment, and rank destitution for many ushered in this first major era.

An early 20th century pioneer of reconstructionism was Harold Rugg. Together with his colleague George Counts (*Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* [1932]), Rugg attempted during the 1920's and 1930's to influence curriculum design to consider social problems, and to use schools as agents for social reform. His focus on the whole child and the notion of training students to implement and manage change was evident in his work *The Child-Centred School* (1928). Planning curriculum in advance and curriculum development by specialists working in conjunction with educators and administrators were two key ideas of this book. While Rugg agreed with the concept of incorporating student interests in instruction, he opposed the progressivist practice of "on the spot" planning that depended largely on student input at the moment of instruction. Rather, he argued for a preplanned blueprint that would outline learning objectives in sequence. This proposition was a milestone in the development of curriculum as a field, and would later influence such educators as Ralph Tyler.

Building on the work of his predecessors, Theodore Brameld (*Toward a Reconstructed Philosophy of Education [1956]*) became a leading proponent of reconstructionism in the 1950's. He called for educators and students to analytically examine social issues, and to take a critical stance.

> *Teachers and students have a right to take sides, to stand up for the best reasoned and informed partialities they can reach as a result of free, meticulous examination and communication of all relevant evidence* (1977, p.70).

Brameld defined what he believed to be the salient features of reconstructionism as an educational philosophy (McNeil, 1985).

1. The creation of a new culture is essential.
2. That the working majority should have control over major institutions and resources is necessary in order to achieve true democracy.
3. Academic and social development should also stress social planning.
4. Students must be persuaded that the need for change is real.
5. Respect for democratic values and processes means that social change must happen in a manner that is neither intimidating nor misleading.

These five key points fashioned the cornerstones for the reconstructionist philosophy as it remains today.

Perhaps one of the most influential reconstructionist philosopher of this century has been Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed [1970]*). Freire's work in Latin America and Africa prompted Third World communities that were politically and economically oppressed to use education as the vehicle to free themselves from the dominant establishment. Adult literacy was a fundamental facet, and Freire used the experiences and culture of the people to teach. Critical thinking and developing an awareness of the indignations that they were enduring were strategies used to assist these people in generating ambitions and plans for bringing about liberating changes. Freire called this process "conscientization" (1970).

While reconstructionism deals with social issues, the curriculum is not restricted to the subject of social studies. The teaching of history is intended to evoke discussion, to be a basis for looking to future reforms; not a subject to be memorized for the sake of

knowledge in itself. Subjects such as science are not necessarily studied from textbooks, as these texts are viewed as tending to examine content outside of its cultural context (Cook & Doll, 1973). Rather, science is learned through experiences and the solving of real problems that affect the community, as is mathematics, reading, writing, economics, health, chemistry, and the arts (McNeil, 1985). There is generally an emphasis on integrating subject areas.

One key feature of the reconstructionist curriculum is that it is not universal. That is, the curricular content will not necessarily be relevant beyond the community which it serves. Because of the stress on context, it is only logical that several aspects of the reconstructionist program will be limited to the geographic area or community within which it operates.

The role of the reconstructionist teacher is more one of liaison with community and pertinent agencies than one of expert. Bringing inequalities and other problems to the fore for research and discussion are primary functions of such educators. The assets of the community (not restricted to monetary) and the human talents and energies within that citizenry become focal resources that the teacher must access.

Like progressivism, reconstructionism encourages student interests in the execution (and sometimes design) of the curriculum; particularly in relation to social problems that are significant in students' lives outside of the classroom.

While the positive view of human nature that is embedded in reconstructionism charms our collective hopes for a finer future, many have been critical of this philosophy of curriculum studies. Traditional quantitative evaluation measures rarely apply to reconstructionist programs. Therefore, determining the educational effectiveness of such plans in empirical terms is very difficult. For those with doubts about reconstructionism, this factor in itself would likely eliminate possible implementation.

A second stumbling block is presented in epistemological, axiological, and ontological practicalities. Who is to determine what is not only true, good, and real for the community, but also what is <u>best</u>? It is this dilemma that has been at the heart of the label "utopian" being given to the reconstructionist philosophy.

The Philosophic Continuum of Curriculum Foundations. We can view the four major philosophies as occurring along a continuum, from the most conservative philosophy (perennialism) to the most liberal (reconstructionism).

Perennialism Essentialism Progressivism Reconstructionism

While a linear continuum quite conveniently organizes these perspectives, it potentially reduces complex, multidimensional concepts to a single point. However, the intent in this instance is to display the four philosophies in relation to one another, following the specific descriptions of critical attributes of each.

In theory, the four perspectives of perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism are described as separate and discrete. Notwithstanding, in practice they may be blended to form a variation of two or more philosophies, depending on the context.

A Critique of the Educational Philosophies of Curriculum Studies. The four major educational philosophies of curriculum studies are useful in illustrating the point that different beliefs lead to different practices, and to demonstrate the concept of internal consistency. They stand as examples for teachers to draw on for reference, as tools to help clarify their own (educational) philosophic stances.

> *...familiarity with the major curriculum positions can help a teacher clarify his or her own approach to teaching and learning. As teachers explore these positions and also the more specific orientations within them, they can identify the aspects of the positions that most closely parallel their own thinking, although, certainly most teachers will find they do not subscribe to any one position in totality* (Miller & Seller, 1985: p.11).

In addition, awareness of perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism can help teachers to better understand the educational past and the forces that have shaped it. As Kircher (1974) concluded,

> *Any philosophy worthy of its name is...the beneficiary of the philosophic past but never a victim of any of them* (p.29).

However, philosophy as a curriculum foundation as described in this chapter has limitations that must be recognized in a meaningful discussion of educational philosophy. Firstly, while perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism are referred to as educational philosophies within the realm of curriculum studies, they are known within the field of educational philosophies as *theories of education* (Knight, 1989).

> *(These) educational theories...differ from the philosophies...in the sense that the theories have been stimulated by educational problems rather than philosophic issues. The theorists, therefore, have not communicated to us in the language of philosophy, even though their theories have been built upon metaphysical* (ontological), *epistemological, and axiological beliefs* (p.122-123).

As prefabricated, ready to use educational philosophies, they lack the depth and breadth necessary for contemporary schools struggling to define their roles within the ever changing expectations of modern society.

It is the emphasis on thinking that is the real hallmark of philosophy as a discipline. While the curriculum foundations provide four categories of theory, simply adopting any one would not require us to think. We must go further to understand the significance of educational philosophy to practice.

> *The true role of philosophy is critical clarification...Part of the function of the study of educational philosophy is to heighten the awareness of educators concerning the philosophic assumptions undergirding the educational theories and to provide educators with the conceptual tools to evaluate those theories* (Knight, 1989: p.123 & 125).

To say that we do not need educational philosophy is tantamount to saying that we do not need to think about why we subscribe to the educational practices that we do.

Individual and Group Philosophies of Education

Philosophy, translated from Greek, means *love of wisdom* (Whitehead, 1957). Thinking, questioning, searching, logic; these are the tools of philosophy as a practical science to improve practice (Kreeft, 1984).

Educational philosophy, as a branch of philosophy, can be described as follows.

> *Educational philosophy is not distinct from general philosophy; it is general philosophy applied to education as a specific human endeavour* (Knight, 1989: p.13.)

Referencing the aspects of epistemology, axiology, and ontology (metaphysics), Knight continues to describe educational philosophy as *activities, a set of attitudes, and a body of content* (Figure 1). He identifies four primary points regarding the function of educational philosophy.

> *...the study of educational philosophy is (1) to help educators become acquainted with the basic problems of education, (2) to enable them to evaluate better the wide variety of suggestions offered as solutions to these problems, (3) to assist in clarifying thinking about the goals of both life and education, and (4) to guide in the development of an internally consistent point of view and a program that relates realistically to the larger world context* (p.4).

This definition provides us with a perspective grounded much more strongly in philosophic thought than simply in educational problems. It places a much greater emphasis on the notion that educational philosophy provides educators with the "why" for teaching, and is much more closely aligned with the spirit of reflective practice as it is described later in this chapter. Such definition has definite implications for understanding individual and group philosophies of education.

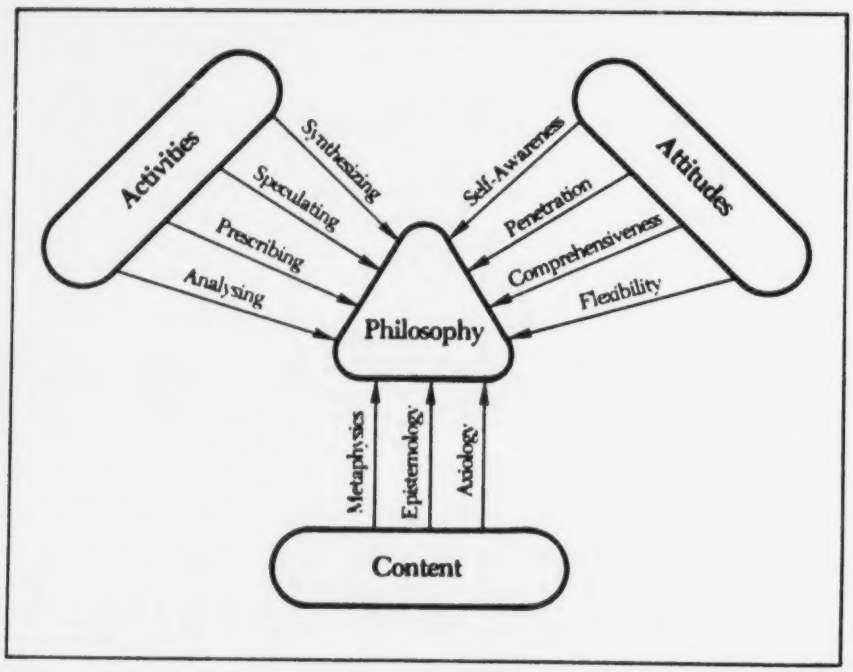
Individual Philosophy of Education. Behar (1994) described educational philosophy of the individual as,

> *...a particular orientation that determines an individual's broad view of a subject. It guides students, teachers, and schools in both teaching and learning. Inquiry into educational philosophy suggests a general view of students, society, as well as curriculum. Educational philosophy leads to a determination of educational theory, educational aims, and curriculum development and design* (p.6).

Cook and Doll (1973) registered this view on the subject.

> *Philosophy deals with understandings rather than facts. It is an effort to see life and its problems in full perspective. It requires a look beyond the immediate to causes and relationships and to future developments. It involves questioning one's own point of view as well as the views of*

FIGURE 1
KNIGHT'S ASPECTS OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY



Source: Knight, G. (1989). *Issues & Alternatives in Educational Philosophy*. (p.5).

> *others; it involves a search for defensible values, an effort to clarify one's beliefs;...It deals in ideas and values, and thus it may intensify one's doubts before it can allay them* (p.32).

Armstrong (1989) expanded on the significance of individual philosophy in relation to group and societal beliefs about education.

> *Individual philosophies of education are clusters of ideas that have certain internal consistencies. Each philosophy reflects a unique view of what is good and what is important. These differences are significant because people who subscribe to alternative philosophies may interpret the worth of a given school subject or given approach to learning in very different ways. It is possible for the work of an individual educator to be held up as a model of sound practice by someone subscribing to one educational philosophy and be pointed to as an example of 'what is wrong with education today' by someone subscribing to a different one* (p.8-9).

Finally, Thomas Sergiovanni (1991) referred to individual educational philosophy as a *mindscape*.

> *...our mindscapes of...how schools work, and the nature of human rationality shape the way we think about theoretical knowledge and the link between this knowledge and how we practice...In many respects, our mindscapes are our intellectual security blankets and road maps through an uncertain world. As road maps they provide the rules, assumptions, images, and principles that define....These road maps make us feel safe, certain, and secure. Mindscapes are so dominant that their assumptions and related practices are not thought about much. They are assumed to be true. Thus, when a mindscape does not fit the world of practice, the problem is thought to lie with that world* (p.3-4).

In his work, *A Sociology of Education*, Meighan (1981) outlined seven clusters of beliefs about teaching which, when combined, formulate an individual educational philosophy. We can liken this viewpoint to the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle which connect to form a whole. Meighan's seven pieces included theories of *knowledge; learning and the learner's role; teaching and the teacher's role; (curriculum) resources; organization*; *assessment,* and *aims, objectives, and outcomes.*

Educational philosophy is significant because it embodies beliefs about all of these areas. As human beings, our actions are guided by our beliefs. Hence, as teachers, our personal educational actions and directions will be governed by what we believe as

individuals to be pedagogically and ethically valid about teaching and learning.

Group Philosophy of Education. The philosophic orientations existing at the individual level have significance at the group level. Specifically, a group educational philosophy must be a representation of the educational philosophies of the individuals within the group in order to have any value or meaning.

Within the research literature, educational philosophy as a group construct can be defined as,

> *...that system of beliefs which gives general direction to the educational policies of those who hold those beliefs* (Scrimshaw, 1983: p.4).

Such collective educational philosophies *contain values, beliefs, and assumptions about children, learning, teaching, knowledge, and the curriculum* (Morrison & Ridley, 1989). Elliot Eisner (1994) indicated that group philosophies,

> *...in general are belief systems that provide the values premises from which decisions about practical educational matters are made* (p.47).

Expanding on the significance of group philosophy, Eisner and Vallance (1974) noted that many controversies at the district or school level over what should be taught and evaluated and how the curriculum should be delivered have a philosophical basis. As

> *...the debate and conflicts generated...derive necessarily from the degree of incompatibility between the values and goals underlying each side of the issue being debated. Controversy in educational discourse most often reflects a basic conflict in priorities concerning the form and content of curriculum and the goals toward which schools should strive; the intensity of the conflict and the apparent difficulty in resolving it can most often be traced to a failure to recognize conflicting conceptions of curriculum. Public education discourse frequently does not bother to examine its conceptual underpinnings* (p.1-2).

Thomas Sergiovanni (1991) described group philosophy as a *covenant of shared values*. This covenant of shared values was seen by Sergiovanni as being part of the larger culture of the school and a prerequisite for building a vision for the school.

> *The fleshing out of this vision requires the building of a shared consensus about purposes and beliefs that creates a powerful force bonding people together around common themes. This bonding provides them with a sense of what is important and some signal of what is of value.* ***With bonding***

> ***in place the school is transformed from an organization to a community*** (p.180).

Further to this, Sergiovanni outlined a synthesis of research on the characteristics of successful schools indicating that a strong school culture (including a covenant of shared values or group philosophy) was a key attribute of successful schools. Other authors of effective schools research literature have also described group philosophy as being an attribute of effective schools (Clark, Lotto, Astuto, 1989; Duttweiler, 1988 & 1990; Reid, Hopkins, & Holly, 1987).

Deal (1993) also viewed group philosophy (*shared values*) as part of the culture of a school. According to Sashkin and Walberg, this culture is critical to the functioning and definition of a school.

> *Culture is an all-encompassing tapestry of meaning. Culture is 'the way we do things around here'...Culture as a construct helps explain why classrooms and schools exhibit common and stable patterns across variable conditions. Internally, culture gives meaning to instructional activity and provides a symbolic bridge between action and results. It fuses individual identity with collective destiny* (p.6-7).

Because schools necessarily accommodate stakeholders representing a multitude of viewpoints (e.g., teachers, parents, students), the concept of a group educational philosophy depicting what individuals within the group view to be real, good, and true becomes much more complex as well as significant. If schools do not take the time to consider the implications and depth of educational philosophy and the connection between individuals' broader life and educational philosophies, they are at great risk of creating statements of "pseudo educational philosophy" that are essentially meaningless. Such statements are frequently words compiled to satisfy bureaucratic requirements rather than to provide the "why" behind educational action.

Educational Philosophy and Curriculum Resource Materials

The philosophical slant of the curriculum resource writer can be likened to the lens of a camera. It is the perspective through which the author views the world; including the classroom. Print (1987) described this phenomenon as follows:

> *How curriculum developers perceive the world, and hence education, is thus determined by posing three philosophical questions: What is real? What is good? What is true? Individuals will perceive and answer these questions in different ways and hence individual philosophies emerge. In turn, differing philosophies will affect how individuals perceive and relate to the curriculum* (p. 53).

This becomes a critical recognition, because the philosophical orientation of the author will be reflected in the curriculum resource materials that are produced. In some instances, this philosophical perspective is not readily apparent, while in other cases it is explicitly outlined in the introductory section of the work.

Educational philosophy becomes important when we consider curriculum resource materials as being among the basic tools that teachers use to fulfil their educational mandate; specifically, the completion of the prescribed portion of the curriculum (*Program of Studies* in the province of Alberta). The curriculum resource author's perspectives on what is real, good, and true will be communicated to the students; in some cases, without the teacher's awareness. And, at times, these philosophical perspectives can be at odds with the teacher's own educational beliefs about teaching and learning. The implications of this inconsistency can be significant. Consider, for example, the teacher who believes that students should acquire critical thinking skills, but who is utilizing resources which actually stifle the development of such thought. The cover of the resource book may claim that it promotes critical thinking, but in actual practice it may do exactly the opposite. Or, we may deliberate a second instance whereby the teacher purchases a resource book purporting to contain lesson plans encouraging scientific inquiry, when in actuality it is a text for simply following directions.

The term "curriculum" did not become popularized in educational circles until 1900 when textbooks became the norm for prospective educators training in teachers' colleges (Schubert, 1980). For a period of time, these textbooks <u>became</u> the curriculum, outlining the content and instructional practices to be used in delivering such content (English, 1992). To a certain extent, this practice continues to date, with textbooks more than occasionally being considered synonymously with the term "curriculum" (Perkinson, 1985).

Moreover, textbooks and other curriculum resource materials play important roles in students coming to know and understand the content that they are to learn, and the skills and attitudes that they are to develop (Behar, 1994).

> *Important purveyors of curriculum, textbooks influence curriculum and determine course content. Sometimes they constitute the course content. Content has become equated with material to be covered in the textbooks. Much of what students receive through their studies...is contingent upon the textbooks selected for their studies* (p.17).

Often lacking previous experience in the subject presented in the resource, students must rely on the materials to gain meaning (Hubbuch, 1989). Eisner (1987, 1994) reiterates this influence that curriculum resource materials wield over students, while Bernstein (1985) and Keith (1985) have focused on the lasting impressions that textbooks and other resources may have on student attitudes towards topics being presented. Ornstein (1990) contends that many times the point of view portrayed in a textbook is the only one that students obtain.

The influence of resource materials prepared by someone other than the teacher continues to the level of instruction.

> *By providing the nucleus around which much of what is taught, textbooks* (and other curriculum resource materials) *determine and direct the nature and sequence of instruction. They have significant impact upon the learning experiences of students* (Behar, 1994: p.17).

Curriculum resource materials may also be used as agents of change, vehicles to bring about broader curriculum reform (Fullan, 1982). In order to effectively implement such change and not simply be swept along unawares, educators must have some understanding of their own paradigms, the beliefs being portrayed in the resource materials, and the tenets being represented in the mandated curriculum.

It is incumbent upon the selecting party to examine the resource for this perspective. It is quite possible, for example, for an essentialist wolf to be disguised in progressivist clothing, and a cursory glance will not necessarily reveal this discrepancy. Consider the analogy of physical appearance. Within a family, it is quite possible for a child to look like neither parent. Yet, delving below the surface and examining the genetic makeup,

the connection is undeniable. Such is the case with curriculum resources. With a bit of deductive detective work, we can begin to discern what the resource developer considers to be real, good, and true.

Educational Philosophy and Reflection

The act of consciously considering one's own educational philosophy in order to be better able to identify resources and practices that are aligned with these beliefs is related to the notion of reflection. Much study has been devoted to this topic in recent years, and subsequently, considerable numbers of articles have been published in educational journals. However, that is not to suggest it is a new practice. It has been a topic for discussion at least since 1933, when John Dewey published his work, *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process.*

Reflective practices have been gaining more recent attention with publications by such writers as Bonser & Grundy (1988), Connelly & Clandinin (1988), Cruikshank (1985), Elbaz (1988), Gore (1987), Greene (1986), Holly (1984), Liston & Zeichner (1987), Pollard (1987), Ross & Hannay (1986), Schon (1987), Shor (1987) and Smyth (1986). The thrust of reflection, as defined collectively by these authors, is not to reflect simply for deliberation's sake, but to critically consider in order to act, to be in a better position to solve the problems that confront teachers on a daily basis. It requires an awareness of the political, social, and economic forces that influence the shaping of educational policies and conditions. It also compels us as educators to critically examine our own beliefs in relation to our practices, and to arrive at an autobiographical understanding of how these came to be. Smyth (1989) noted that,

> *...our experiences as teachers have meaning for us in terms of our own historically located consciousness; what we need to do is to work at articulating that consciousness in order to interpret meaning* (p. 4-5).

Smyth continues, moving in the direction of suggesting questions that will help to structure these reflections.

> *Locating or situating teaching in a broader cultural, social, and political context amounts to engaging in critical reflection about the assumptions*

> *that underlie those methods and classroom practices...As a way of providing some structure, teachers can approach the confrontation of local theories of teaching through a series of guiding questions, that might include the following (p.7):*
>
> ° *What do my practices say about my assumptions, values, and beliefs about teaching?*
> ° *Where did these ideas come from?*
> ° *What social practices are expressed in these ideas?*
> ° *What is it that causes me to maintain my theories?*
> ° *What views of power do they embody?*
> ° *Whose interests seem to be served by my practices?*
> ° *What is it that acts to constrain my views of what is possible in teaching?* (Smyth, 1987).

These questions directly relate to issues of epistemology, axiology, and ontology. The selection of curriculum resource materials can be considered an element of Smyth's "practices" referenced in these queries. Rudduck (1984) described the importance of such reflection in relation to practice as a *responsible professional act* (p.6). As well, reflection is strongly linked in the literature with teacher empowerment.

Research on the Connection Between Educational Philosophy and the Selection of Curriculum Resource Materials

The arena of educational philosophy continues to be one, within the North American educational tradition, that exists largely inside the realm of tacit knowledge. The beliefs embedded within a philosophy are not easily tapped and understood through such quantitative methods as surveys, questionnaires, or the like.

Database searches of doctoral dissertations of the past revealed relatively few studies focusing on the selection of curriculum resource materials. Only one study specifically pursued the relationship between beliefs about teaching and the selection of materials.

One researcher examining the decision making authority of teachers with regard to the selection of materials concluded that teachers do indeed participate in determining which resources will be employed in their classrooms (Racke, 1992). A second study examined whether or not teachers would be more likely to select resources if they were

offered at no cost (Griffin, 1991). Another dissertation by Noble (1990) indicated that purchasing relevant resources is important to effective implementation of curriculum changes. Yet another study found that both teachers and curriculum directors agreed that it was advantageous to provide teachers with release time in order to *enhance the instructional materials selection process* (Bollwerk, 1992).

Cohen (1982: p.1406-A) surveyed a random cross section of elementary teachers, principals, curriculum coordinators, and publishers in the Los Angeles County district and found that they identified the following eight criteria as being the most important factors in the selection of materials. These are listed in order of significance.

1. *Instructional materials are appropriately sequenced.*
2. *Instructional materials include training procedures and materials for teachers.*
3. *The characteristics of the students with whom the materials were developed and tested were reported.*
4. *Behavioral objectives were specified.*
5. *Learner characteristics were specified.*
6. *The time and cost requirements for instructional materials were reasonable.*
7. *Data were available to support claims of effectiveness.*
8. *The technical manual indicated the required teacher qualifications.*

Cohen's findings did not mention educational philosophy as being a factor in the selection of curriculum resource materials.

A sixth study focused on selecting appropriate pieces of music to facilitate changes to the approach used to teach music at Korean universities and colleges (Lee, 1986).

> *In addition to the lack of adequate pedagogical materials, one basic problem that exists in Korean piano instruction is an overemphasis on the development of technical facility toward a final product of pianistic proficiency. Many other important aspects of music study - analyzing, interpreting, and improvising - are frequently neglected. Considering this particular teaching condition in Korea, an ancillary objective of the study was to assist Korean piano instructors in becoming aware of and understanding the importance and value of a comprehensive musicianship approach in teaching piano. In this regard the repertoire collected served as a basis for the implementation of such an approach* (p. 56-A).

Lee's choices of resources are overtly stated in relation to his beliefs about good

instructional practices. However, the dissertation does not delve into this association.

Finally, one quantitative study entitled *An Analysis of the Relationship Between Teachers' Beliefs and the Manner of Structuring the Classroom Environment* (Hughes, 1980) specifically researching possible correlations between teachers' paradigms and practices used three instruments: Rokeach Dogmatism Scale E to measure teachers' degree of dogmatism, a researcher constructed scale to judge the classroom environment and materials, and a demographic questionnaire. The Pearson product-moment correlation, dependent group *t*-test, independent groups *t*-test, and multiple linear regression statistical methods were used to analyze the data. Hughes found that *no relationship exists between teachers' dogmatism and their manner of structuring the physical environment or their selection of instructional materials* (p.2349-A). The researcher also stated that degree of dogmatism was *not related to age, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, or grade level* (p.2439-A). While the dissertation provided statistical data to support the findings, the work did not explore why the findings were such; nor did it pursue whether teachers were simply unaware of their paradigms or indeed practised irrespective of their convictions. Finally, Hughes did not appear to recognize the subtle distinction between the concepts of "beliefs" and "dogma"; specifically, that one can be dogmatic about many different beliefs. The two terms are not necessarily interchangeable.

Education is a human activity. As such, the investigation into many facets of the field require more than quantifiable measures to further our collective understanding. Often, more importantly that discerning a description of what is, it is more meaningful and appropriate to ascertain why a specific condition exists. With regard to the question of discerning the role of philosophy in contemporary classrooms, it is proposed that a qualitative study would be a valuable means to coming to a richer understanding of this phenomenon in action.

The notion that the use of "objective", "scientific", or "quantifiable" research methods do not provide the "whole picture" has been a substantial rationale in the evolution of qualitative inquiry. The growing realization that the "objective" and "scientific"

instruments used in educational studies were not so pure as had been imagined, nor the researchers employing them as neutral as had been believed has given impetus to transfer investigative techniques from the social sciences such as anthropology and ethnography. It is an attempt at humanizing research; from viewing people as "subjects" to seeing them as participants within a context; from merely describing what exists to grappling with a cognizance of why it exists and the implications for those living with the phenomenon; from a linear equation to a broader understanding of the complexities and multiplicities of meaning; from a single perspective to the acknowledgement of myriad vantage points to ascertain; from a focus on universal theories to an emphasis on context.

Implications of the Research Literature for Furthering the Study

North American society has become so focused on the notion of "progress" that we frequently forget to consider why we wish to channel our attentions and energies in new directions (Postman & Weingartner, 1973). Education has not escaped this emphasis.

It has become a real challenge to overcome our preoccupation with "how" and balance our desire for progress in education with equal, if not greater, time being devoted to "why". The plethora of "new" techniques, strategies, and resources simply play out this concern. Textbooks, teachers' manuals, kits, display materials, workbooks, stickers, and the like appear to be in increasing supply and demand; all with the aim of helping us to "progress" as educators, to provide us with the "how" of teaching.

It would seem logical that educational philosophy, as a representation of what is considered to be good, real, and true about teaching and learning, would become the "why", a template to help educators sort through this marketing barrage. Following this line of thought, it would seem to be advantageous to effective practice for teachers to have a high degree of consciousness of their own educational philosophies.

During a time when public education is under tremendous pressure to explain why it subscribes to its current practices, it seems paradoxical that educational philosophy is not more explicitly developed among members of the teaching profession. As demands for higher levels of student achievement grow louder, accountability for choices of

resources as teaching tools will also increase. Teachers may need to be increasingly articulate advocates of their own practices in coming years.

Chapter 3
DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Introduction to the Study

Within the context of this dissertation, it was decided that the most suitable method to investigate teachers' understandings of philosophy and its role in relation to the selection of curriculum resource materials was through a case study that combined repertory grids (personal construct theory), interviews (hermeneutics), and participant observation (ethnography). Although personal construct theory and the use of repertory grid analysis are not qualitative methods in themselves, they were used together with interviews for this research.

Research Design

Blending concepts from personal construct theory, hermeneutical inquiry, and ethnography, a single-case study of a local elementary school was undertaken.

The selection of the case(s) for study is a crucial and often difficult stage in case study research (Yin, 1993). In the instance of the critical case (a site which illustrates a theoretical proposition), the criteria for selection must be very clear so that the researcher can make a strong case that demonstrates a direct link between theory and practice.

Secondly, as with all qualitative inquiries, the intentional selection of participants who will best answer the research question is an important stage in carrying out high calibre work (Creswell, 1994).

The search for a potential site for this dissertation began with considering a variety of schools which the researcher knew by reputation through professional association with Edmonton Public Schools. Three key criteria were established for this preliminary screening. Firstly, the site should represent a critical case. That is, the school must have had an explicitly stated group educational philosophy already in place, and this educational philosophy statement had to have some function in relation to decisions made by the staff. Secondly, the site was to have been an Edmonton Public School. This was

significant because of this district's site-based management policy which establishes the parameters schools' expenditures and decision-making processes. Thirdly, because of the researcher's teaching experience within Edmonton Public Schools, the site could not be one where the researcher had taught or had extensive prior connections with staff members. In summary, as Bogdan and Biklen (1992) noted, this phase of the selection process is one of narrowing possibilities.

> *The start of the (case) study is the wide end: the researchers scout for possible places and people that might be the subject or the source of data, find the location they think they want to study, and then cast a wide net trying to judge the feasibility of the site or data source for their purposes* (p.62).

Because some of the research literature explored in the study would pertain to "effective" and "successful schools" (Clark, Lotto, Astuto, 1989; Duttweiler, 1988 & 1990; Reid, Hopkins, & Holly, 1987; Sergiovanni, 1991), the judgement of a senior staff member (associate superintendent) established the suitability of the final site for participation. The associate superintendent described Bisset as a "successful school" as delineated by Joan Lipsitz's characteristics of successful schools drawn from her four case studies in the 1980's. Within this characterization, the attribute most significant to this study was,

> *Through their vision and practicality they* (principals) *articulate for their schools...a collective ideology that defines an organization's identity and purposes. The principals make these schools coherent, binding philosophy to goals, goals to programs, and programs to practices* (Lipsitz, 1984: p.174).

It was this description that made Bisset School appear such an appropriate site for this research. Initial meetings and discussions with the school's administration and staff confirmed their suitability. Finally, the willingness and consent of the site's administration and staff to participate in the study was established.

Developing a Single-Case Study. This dissertation is an exploratory, single-case study of a site that represented a critical case. Specifically, the site was a school that consistently referred to its collective (group) educational philosophy when choosing curriculum resource materials as well as choices about many other aspects of teaching and

learning.

The purpose of writing the single-case study is not to fashion universal generalizations based on an individual circumstance. The findings are not to be considered necessarily representative of the larger population. Rather, it is to consider the question, "What can we learn from this situation?" It provides a forum from which to deliberate the findings in order to further our understanding of a specific issue.

The rationale for carrying out a single-case study is based on the need or desire to comprehend and appreciate a complex social happening in its native setting. A case study

> *...investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used* (Yin, 1989: p.23).

Schramm's statement (1971) adds to this perspective.

> *...the essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result* (p.7).

The thrust of the study, then, is to learn more about "how" and/or "why". This being so, the researcher does not seek to control or modify the behaviour of the research participants. These points are the trademark conditions for undertaking a case study.

The quality of the case study can be judged on four criteria: *construct validity (establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied), internal validity (establishing a causal link whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships), external validity (establishing the domain to which a study's findings can be generalized)* and *reliability (demonstrating that the operations of the study - such as the data collection procedures - can be repeated with the same results)* (Yin, 1989).

Yin sites six sources of data that may be accessed during data collection: *documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations,* and *physical artifacts*. This is consistent with Spradley's (1980) approach to ethnographic research.

Finally, Yin (1994) concludes that there are five characteristics of exemplary case studies. These studies are: *significant, complete, consider alternative perspectives, display sufficient evidence,* and *are composed in an engaging manner.*

Method

Personal Construct Theory. One tool that has provided researchers insight into teachers' thinking (including their belief systems) is the repertory grid (Yorke, 1987). The repertory grid is a methodological offshoot of personal construct theory that was put forth by George Kelly in 1955 in his work, *The Psychology of Personal Constructs.*

> *...teacher's behaviours are guided by and make sense in relation to a personally held system of beliefs, values, and principles. Prior to the researcher's intervention, these systems are typically not well specified, and the central task of the researcher is to assist the teacher in moving from an implicitly held and private belief system to an explicit description of his or her cognitive frame of reference...*
>
> *One approach which promises a holistic view of the individual, which renders explicit what individuals hold tacitly, and which enables them to do so in their own terms is Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory. Whereas other techniques - presuppose that one can use the terms offered by others, the repertory grid technique evolving out of Kelly's work allows one to discover the personal constructs in terms of which one experiences attitudes, thoughts, and feelings in a personally valid way (Solas, 1992: p.208).*

The repertory grid is used to elicit personal constructs of meaning. Participants are either given or asked to provide a set of elements relevant to the topic being studied. Constructs (bipolar adjective pairs) are then elicited to describe the elements. It is generally recommended that participants supply these adjectives themselves, as choices of these descriptors can be particularly telling of the participants' values and beliefs. Participants rank or rate the elements using the constructs to produce a two-dimensional (element X construct) matrix for the purpose of illustrating contrasts and similarities. The pattern that emerges from the matrix provides numerical data on individual participants' perspectives.

However, Pope and Denicolo (1993) warn of the dangers of limiting research to the results of the repertory grid. Rather, they recommend the use of a follow-up conversation

(hermeneutic approach) to further ascertain meaning.

Hermeneutics. Hermeneutic inquiry is *about creating meaning, not simply reporting on it* (Smith, 1991: p. 201). It begins with a search for greater understanding of an issue or concern embedded in a real life, everyday situation. This quest leads the researcher to observe, to interview, to listen. Results of such investigation frequently lead to new lines of inquiry, and fresh research questions may emerge. Using the stories of participants, the hermeneutic essay draws on the experiences and words of participants to construct its case, recognizing that results are contextually bound and not necessarily universally applicable.

The use of a hermeneutic approach makes demands on the researcher. It is critical that the researcher attend to the nuances of language and its use in conversation with participants. The spoken language plays a key role in relaying and understanding human experiences. As such, it is an integral element of hermeneutic research (Gadamer, 1985). To commit to the notion of interpretability is also key. Finally, it is necessary to have the desire to bring everyday activities to the fore for exploration so that their meaning in the larger picture may be more fully understood (Smith, 1991).

Hermeneutics, by its very nature, examines both epistemological and ontological queries. It also has potential for drawing out axiological considerations; the third part of philosophy. Thus, the researcher can learn more about participants' thoughts on truth, goodness, and reality.

Ethnography. Ethnography represents a second qualitative research approach used in this study. By definition, it is,

> *The social research style that emphasizes encountering alien worlds and making sense of them...*(Agar, 1976: p.12)

James Spradley (1980) describes this method as,

> *The work of describing a culture. The central aim of ethnography is to understand another way of life from the native point of view...Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people* (p.3).

Educational researchers have more recently come to understand that the principles of ethnography apply equally to the culture of the classroom as they do to a more distant or

foreign community. The notions of *cultural behaviour, knowledge, and artifacts* (Spradley, 1980) have been successfully transferred to schools settings, giving investigators a entirely new landscape from which to perceive what is real, good, and true from the eyes of those who live within that school or classroom culture. Reviewing the work of Sergiovanni (1991) and Sashkin and Walberg (1993), the importance of cultivating a culture within a school has been linked to the success of the school.

In ethnographic terms, we can view curriculum resource materials as artifacts of classroom culture. They potentially provide tangible testimonies of teachers' beliefs. We can learn from the way teachers talk about resources what is considered good, real, and true. We can open up broader discussions of values and assumptions inherent in the use of these materials. They are concrete starting points into exploring more abstract philosophical concepts connected with educational paradigms.

Data Collection

There were three levels of voluntary participation in this study: individual, small group, and whole staff. Several artifacts were also used as sources of information.

A total of 23 separate visits were made for the purpose of data collection (22 on site, and 1 off site). The intent and content of each visit is recounted more fully and in chronological order in the *Case Data Base* (Appendix A).

The timing of the data collection (the latter part of April through the end of June) was intentional and is of significance to the findings of this study. As many schools select and purchase curriculum resource materials during this final stage of the school year for the coming term, it was considered that this would represent an optimum opportunity to observe and better understand one school's process for selecting materials and the role of educational philosophy within that process.

Individual Participants. There were six individual participants in this study: Mary (Participant A), Kathy (Participant B), Sally (Participant C), Patricia (Participant D), Sue (Participant E), and Marvin (Participant F).

Mary had worked with Bisset's principal at two other schools, both as an intern and

as a teacher, before coming to her current assignment. Her initial interest in music education has now shifted to a focus on primary education, but she still enjoys and values infusing the arts into her students' everyday program. She is a strong advocate of the school's literature based approach to learning and believes that she is a learner alongside her students. Mary has taught for eight years since graduating in 1986, and is currently working on her Master's degree. She came to Bisset five years ago when the school was in its second year of operation.

Kathy graduated from the University of Alberta in 1984 and completed a Master's degree in Special Education in 1992. She has a college certificate in interpreting for the deaf and has taught deaf children. She came to Bisset School in 1990 and has worked with students in years three through six. Kathy has a strong belief in lifelong learning and searches for ways to bring real life meaning to curriculum content. "Relevance, purpose, meaning, pragmatic" are concepts which characterize the program she strives to deliver to her students.

Sally completed her Bachelor of Education degree in the spring of 1986 and began teaching the following September. She worked at one other school before coming to Bisset four years ago. A key characteristic of her teaching is treating students with respect and understanding how fragile children's feelings can be. She feels strongly that a healthy self-esteem and a sense of efficacy are important precursors to learning. Sally values her own professional judgement in determining her students' needs.

Patricia, Bisset's curriculum coordinator and principal designate, was an original staff member when the school opened. Having been part of the original staff of another new school in the 1980's, she brought that experience to her administrative role at Bisset. She has taught all the elementary grade levels and was acting as the teacher-librarian at the time of this study. Patricia has worked with a variety of schools in the district over the span of her career.

Sue, the school's principal, has worked as a teacher, consultant, and administrator in the district. It is of significance to this study that Sue is also the school's founding principal, and that Bisset's educational philosophy, programs, and practices have evolved under her management. The individual participants in the study contributed many positive

comments about their principal as a person and as a leader.

> *"Sue has a nurturing way of managing people, a nurturing way of running the school. She is very caring, very warm and friendly. She's always affectionate with us. She knows if you're having a bad time. She watches and she'll be into your room, checking on you. She never checks to see how you're teaching; she checks to see how you're feeling, if there's something going on in your life* (C/95/05/18)."

> *"I knew, philosophically, that I could work here because I made sure that Sue and I matched philosophically before I even came to Bisset. I have to have that philosophical match. I also knew that her style was to trust and empower teachers, and to hire extremely good staff who can then be left alone to do the job that they are good at doing* (B/95/05/08)."

> *"Sue is brilliant. She's always striving to be on the cutting edge.*
>
> *"I call her a practical visionary. Some leaders have really great ideas, but don't have any plan for how to do them. Then there are leaders who just do things, but have no vision. But Sue is a practical visionary; she's got a vision, but she also has ideas on how to get there. And, she's not afraid to not have all the answers...* (F/95/06/09)."

> *"Sue was probably the biggest reason for me coming here. I agree wholeheartedly with her philosophy. She's had a major influence on my career. She's a visionary principal, a visionary educational leader. I love her ideas and I love being in a place where she's at...*
>
> *"She believes that philosophy has to be the cornerstone, the foundation of everything that we do. I've seen her work with different staffs, building that philosophy, moving staff in a direction to make them a real team having a philosophical base that branches out into all other areas of schooling. She has the strength to pull people together. She knows how to pick people for a team and then how to move and motivate them...*
>
> *"Sue keeps us challenged, and gives us new ideas and things to think about. She's really used reflection and being a teacher-researcher. We have journals that we use at staff meetings as well as other written reflections that we do throughout the year...*
>
> *"Talking with us, giving us time as a staff to talk and write, to reflect and*

> *think; Sue is really good at creating spaces and time to grow and explore because our days are so busy. There is definitely space for teacher talk to happen all the time...*
>
> *"She's always on the cutting edge, the innovative side of education. So it's really exciting working with her* (A/95/04/25)."

Marvin, also a founding staff member, has taught for 17 years at both the elementary and high school levels. An avid athlete himself, he encourages students as they participate in physical education pursuits both in and out of school. He also enjoys outdoor education activities with his students and places an emphasis on physical and mental challenge to help children grow and mature. Marvin has shared his expertise and experiences at Bisset with other teachers at presentations and workshops both within and outside of the district.

Mary, Kathy, Sally, and Marvin volunteered to work with the researcher by each participating in three separate interviews of a one hour duration. Each completed a repertory grid analysis, choosing twelve categories of curriculum resource materials for discussion from a list of seventeen potential classifications (elements) derived by the researcher: *textbooks, literature, information books, people (adult guest speakers from outside of the classroom), people (students from the classroom), audiovisual materials (videos, films, slides, filmstrips, audio recordings, overhead transparencies), reference items (dictionary, thesaurus, atlas, maps, globe), hands-on kits (construction, manipulatives), computer (CD Rom), commercially prepared display materials for educational purposes (bulletin boards, posters), commercially prepared display materials for decorative purposes (bulletin boards, posters), art supplies, science materials, lessons/tasks/activities designed by others (blackline masters), lessons/tasks/activities designed by self, educational games,* and *other*. The final category of *other* was included in the event that a teacher wished to discuss one type of resource that was not noted. The list itself was not intended to be exhaustive; rather, it included potential resource materials for a variety of (educational) philosophic orientations. Following the thought that an individual's educational philosophy will hold internal consistencies, it seemed reasonable to consider that discussion surrounding these materials could potentially lead to

information regarding other aspects of participants' belief systems.

The results of the repertory grid analysis were not used in themselves as sources of data; rather, they formed the basis of subsequent discussions with participants. As such, the analysis was a form of springboard to learn more about the individual's educational philosophies and about the beliefs and practices of the staff as a whole. The individuals were also given the opportunity to share information about themselves through other vehicles of their choice: teacher portfolios, photographs, written reflections, curriculum resource materials, classroom displays, samples of students' work, and other artifacts found within their classrooms were also drawn upon as sources of revelation during the interviews.

Separate interviews were conducted with the principal and curriculum coordinator. Repertory grid analysis was not used in these instances. Rather, the discussions were more open ended.

All interviews were tape recorded with consent and transcribed. Participants were given copies of their own transcripts.

Small Group Participation. During the period of data collection, the primary team (kindergarten and years one and two) held an extensive planning meeting for their final unit of the year which included the selection of the majority of curriculum resource materials for the upcoming lessons. The meeting took place in the home of one of the teachers and included eight staff members. It extended from after school through the evening, and included a dinner break during which the researcher was able to conduct a tape recorded group interview. In addition to responding to questions about the group and individual processes used for choosing resources, the participants were also presented with a series of materials that the researcher surmised would be deemed to be largely unsuitable for the school. The reaction to the materials and the follow up discussion provided substantial insight into how resources were considered to be artifacts representative of the school's culture.

Whole Staff Participation. Staff meetings involving the entire faculty provided another source of data. In addition, the whole staff was invited to participate in a survey later in the study. Once it became apparent that discussion about educational philosophy

and its significance was fairly commonplace at Bisset, it was decided that it would be desirable to take a group "reading" that would reveal additional information about individuals within the group as well as permitting the researcher to determine the standings of Mary, Kathy, Sally, Patricia, Sue, and Marvin within the staff. Did these six individuals represent anomalies, or were there views representative of the larger faculty?

Four questions were posed on the survey. *1). What is an educational philosophy? 2). On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being least important and 10 being most important), how important is educational philosophy to your teaching practices? Why? 3). Throughout your career, what factors have encouraged the development of your educational philosophy? 4). Throughout your career, what factors have inhibited or discouraged the development of your educational philosophy?* Twelve of the nineteen teaching staff, including the six individual participants, responded to the survey.

Artifacts. A variety of school artifacts provided further data. Budget documents, memos, charts developed by the staff and posted in the staffroom and workroom areas, and the school handbook were utilized. Field notes constructed during site visits were also explored for applicable material.

Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) consider data analysis to consist of *three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification* (p.10). They explain it as an *interactive, cyclical process* (p.12).

Data reduction, as the words suggest, is described as

> *...the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the "raw" data that appear in written-up field notes...As data collection proceeds, there are further episodes of data reduction (doing summaries, coding, teasing out themes, making clusters, making partitions, writing memos)...It is <u>part</u> of analysis* (p. 10-11).

The notion that data displays (ie: matrices, graphs, charts) are an effective tool for valid qualitative analysis is stressed by Miles and Huberman (1984). In addition to assisting the researcher to summarize specific portions of the data and identify potential

themes, they assert that simply relying on narrative text can create a final qualitative report that is less concise and more likely to lead both researcher and reader to

> *hasty, partial, unfounded conclusions. We advocate much more systematic, powerful displays, and urge a more iterative stance toward their generation and use* (p.21-22).

The creation of meaning and conclusion drawing/verification are fundamentally significant activities in qualitative research. This process of meaning making continues throughout the research period; it is not reserved only for the culmination of the work. This is in marked contrast to quantitative research.

> *From the start of the data collection, the qualitative analyst is beginning to decide what things mean, is noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows and propositions. The competent researcher holds these conclusions lightly, maintaining openness and skepticism, but the conclusions are still there, inchoate and vague at first, then increasingly explicit and grounded..."Final" conclusions may not appear until data collection is over* (Miles & Huberman, 1994: p.11).

Miles and Huberman (1984, 1994) describe a number of tactics to assist in the interest of drawing and verifying conclusions. The following were used in this research: *counting* (registering the frequency of ideas or concepts), *noting themes and patterns, plausibility, clustering ideas* (within a broad theme to derive a series of subthemes which can be reconnected to restate the major pattern), *making metaphors, building a logical chain of evidence,* and *making conceptual/theoretical coherence.*

Within the context of this report, the creation of conceptual/theoretical coherence was enhanced by examining data alongside a range of research literature. Because of the spiralling nature of hermeneutic inquiry (due to the need to actively try out different interpretive frameworks in search of the most adequate one), a second review of relevant literature based on the data was necessary. This tandem, parallel process of consulting literature and analyzing data provided many occasions for making additional connections with the literature (e.g., identifying and naming many of the phenomena that were encountered at the research site). This form of analysis was undertaken later in the research, following the initial emergence of themes and patterns.

During the research period for this dissertation, data analysis occurred throughout the data collection process. This allowed the researcher to explore initial interpretations, to explore more fully areas of interest or uncertainty, and to investigate gaps in the data. Such ongoing analysis also provided, at times, new directions for the inquiry that had not been anticipated in the original proposed design for this study. Continuing analysis was also necessary because of the use of the case study strategy of pattern matching as described by Yin (1989). In addition, this process helped the researcher to avoid becoming completely overwhelmed by too large amounts of information. Finally, because the research period in this instance was limited (not to extend beyond the end of the school year), it was critical to take full advantage of every interview and other research opportunity.

Trustworthiness of Interpretation

No amount of evidence can prove me right,
and <u>any</u> amount of evidence can prove me wrong.
(Albert Einstein)

There are four central questions that must be considered in the search for trustworthiness in qualitative research: (1) How well does the interpretation reflect the truths and realities of the participants? (2) How well has the study been constructed (methodologically) and carried out? (3) How has the researcher dealt with his or her own biases? and (4) How has the significance of the findings been explored and presented?

Relevant Research Literature. Achieving trustworthiness and authenticity of findings is a research matter that must be carefully considered in the planning stages of the qualitative study. Creswell (1994) suggests that the researcher be mindful of *internal validity* (including *triangulation* and *feedback from informants*), *external validity* (the degree to which the findings can be generalized beyond the specific context being investigated), and *reliability* (including statements about the *central assumptions* of the study, *selection of informants*, and the *biases and values of the researcher*).

Guba and Lincoln (1981) discuss the issue of trustworthiness of interpretation under

four major categories: *truth value* (internal validity), *fittingness for applicability, "auditability" for consistency, and confirmability for neutrality* (p.104).

Truth value refers not to universal truths, but to the truth of the study's participants. Is the portrayal described in the findings an accurate reflection of their truths and realities? Awareness of the effects produced by the researcher's presence is one concern that can be handled through *close monitoring of* (participants') *responses and a prolonged engagement at the site* (p.105). Establishing a rapport with participants prior to the start of the formal research while resisting the urge to "go native" are also important safeguards according to Guba and Lincoln.

Attention to data gathering techniques (for internal and external consistency) and cross-checking participants' words to develop *a degree of structural corroboration* (triangulation) (p.106) are other key strategies that will help ensure trustworthiness of interpretation.

Returning interpretations of findings to participants for confirmation is an important phase (ethically and for authenticity) in the research process. Feedback (positive or negative) from participants must be reflected in the reporting of findings.

The issue of *fittingness for applicability* in qualitative study does not mean that the findings should necessarily be generalizable to the larger population. Although it is often considered the role of the readers to align the findings with their own specific contexts, the conclusions should not be so exclusive to the study's participants' site or situation that the work is essentially meaningless. To an extent, the degree of fittingness applicability will be determined by the strength of internal trustworthiness.

For this particular case study, the theoretical proposition that educational philosophy does indeed play a role in the selection of curriculum resource materials has been explored within the context of one school site. The fittingness for applicability, then, focuses on whether or not the proposition fits the context; namely, Bisset School.

To measure this fit, it was necessary to have knowledge of educational philosophy as individual and collective constructs, and to have a clear understanding of the research site to which theory was to be compared. A fairly extensive site description as well as

numerous quotes from participants establish this extent of fittingness.

"Auditability" for consistency can be achieved by maintaining a record of decisions and actions taken during the research period. Overlapping methods (triangulation) and replication of steps within the study are two other tactics noted by Guba and Lincoln (p.121-122) that were used in this study.

Objectivity, as defined in quantitative inquiry, is not a major aim of qualitative research. Rather, recognizing the subjectivity of multiple realities and other human issues that enter into qualitative study, the thrust is on producing authenticity; findings that are representative of the participants' world(s) at the time that the study was done. *Confirmability for neutrality*, then, refers not to clinical objectivity but to the researchers' abilities to not impose their own truths and realities onto the findings. Do the findings reveal participants' perceptions, or are the findings more synchronous with what the researcher wants the findings to be? By attending carefully to the notions of *truth value* and *"auditability" for consistency*, these issues can be largely resolved. As Guba and Lincoln wrote,

> *The data should be factual and confirmable...the concept of confirmability has another important virtue: it shifts the burden of proof from the investigator to the information itself* (p.125-126).

The concept of multiple realities regarding a single phenomenon or state of affairs as opposed to *ontological objectivity* is discussed by Eisner (1991). He describes three criteria for evaluating validity of interpretation: *coherence, insight,* and *instrumental utility*.

The degree to which the qualitative account makes sense and the degree to which the conclusions drawn from the findings are logical and upheld by the data will determine the depth of coherence. The use of multiple sources of data (to create *structural corroboration*), the consideration of alternate interpretations, and a clear argument to support the choice of interpretation also relate to the concern of coherence.

Consensus is a second characteristic that Eisner notes.

> *Consensus is the condition in which investigators or readers of a work concur that the findings and/or interpretations reported by the investigator*

> *are consistent with their own experience or with the evidence presented* (p.56).

However, Eisner is quick to point out that consensus does not necessarily imply universal truth; rather, it signifies agreement between researcher and reader.

Instrumental utility, or usefulness (of *comprehension, anticipation* [e.g. of future events or states of being], and *guiding*) is the third attribute Eisner addresses in relation to trustworthiness of interpretation (p.58-59).

Trustworthiness and Authenticity in this Study. Trustworthiness of interpretation of data collected, or authenticity, is of central concern in qualitative study. As Miles and Huberman (1984) stated, *qualitative analyses can be evocative, illuminating, masterful, and downright wrong* (p.230). To help ensure authenticity throughout this study, the following specific safeguards were employed: *triangulation of data, looking for negative evidence, representativeness, checking for researcher effects, searching for contrasts and comparisons, replicating a finding,* and *seeking feedback from informants.* Each of these tactics is discussed more fully in Miles and Huberman (1984), pages 230 through 243 and in Miles and Huberman (1994), pages 262 through 275.

The overlapping of data gathering techniques (repertory grid analyses, interviews, observations, examination of documents, questionnaire) added to the internal strength of the study.

External validity, or the degree to which the findings of the study could possibly be applied by readers to contexts beyond Bisset, was addressed by reviewing a range of research literature on educational philosophy, organizational culture, and cultural leadership. Selections from this literature were laid alongside the findings for comparison and corroboration.

The issue of reliability was dealt with by outlining the assumptions underlying the study (in the introductory chapter), by providing a rationale for the site selection, and by revealing the background and biases of the researcher.

Background and Biases

Coming to an understanding of the truths and realities of others is a process which requires us as researchers to first identify our own experiences and how these events have shaped our perceptions and beliefs about what is real, good, and true. As Mary Catherine Bateson (1994) remarked,

> *Insight, I believe, refers to that depth of understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another* (p.14).

We need not make believe that we are without human background or even humanness itself. Rather, it is incumbent upon the qualitative investigator to reflect upon and come to an understanding of those influences that affect interpretations of situations and conversations.

My initial, rather jolting encounter with the abstraction of philosophy came during my very first job interview for a teaching position. Heading the interview panel, a rather patriarchal principal leaned forward with pen and pad in hand and queried, "What is your philosophy of education?" Completely blindsided, I stalled for time. What kind of question was that? Why hadn't he tapped my "brilliance" on the practicalities of classroom life; answers I had already prepared? Who cared about philosophy? "I'm sorry, but could you repeat the question?" That summarized the most well-spoken portion of my response.

My second memorable encounter with philosophy came two years later. Acting as a supply teacher in search of that elusive first class I could call my own, I grasped the opportunity to tackle the rather formidable task ahead of me. Being seventeenth in a succession of "subs" who had withdrawn their services from this particular class of children, I was determined to make a success of the situation; beginning with a complete overhaul of the classroom.

The rather crusty custodian had informed me the very first day (indeed, the first hour) that he had no intention of doing more than emptying the garbage until the room had been "tidied" and "organized a bit". Judging from his physical stance and the condition of the room, this had been a bone of contention for some time.

It seemed to me that every conceivable centimetre of space in that classroom was full

of "stuff". Any and all manners of resource materials appeared to be represented in this vast array: posters, toys, multitudes of textbooks, dozens of boxes of odds and ends, paints, brushes, newspapers and magazines, a rainbow of paper products, even samples of carpet and false brick facing were stacked in piles reaching almost to the ceiling. Literally thousands of unused worksheets crammed the cubbies. Dust balls had formed on the top sheets and their purple gestetner ink had faded so that the words were less than recognizable. After bagging nearly half of what I had deemed to be "junk", it seemed I had made only a small dent in the clean-up task. Pondering the ramifications of simply throwing a lighted match at the whole business, I wondered, "Why would this teacher have all of this material in here? What would motivate someone to make such a collection? What was it all used for? Was it ever used?"

A third notable incident occurred the following year when I had finally achieved my goal of obtaining a temporary contract and a class all my own. Eager to impress my supervisor, I volunteered to participate on the school's philosophy committee. The principal, also new to the school, believed it necessary for the staff to come to a collective consensus regarding our educational beliefs. Because he envisioned future changes in the direction of the school, establishing a common philosophical basis seemed to him to be a very necessary starting point. This was the first time I had encountered a true use for philosophy, the first time I had considered it as having any practical application.

However, it was only a short time before my newly discovered pragmatic bubble was burst. Producing a draft copy of the committee's work, a close friend scoffed, "You know, you're just wasting your time. Why don't you just have a slice of apple pie?"

"What do you mean?" I countered.

"Motherhood, apple pie, mission statements, philosophy...it's all the same thing; fluffy stuff that makes everyone feel good, has no real purpose, and just hangs on the wall so you can tell someone downtown that you did it."

Taking exception to this feedback, although not understanding the root of my feelings of insult, I periodically puzzled over this response for months. As the school's direction indeed began to change, I noticed that these transformations consistently happened within

the context of the educational philosophy statement which had been developed by the committee and then ratified by the entire staff; teachers, support staff and custodial staff. It was then that I began to understand that educational philosophy is not something that is simply an annual exercise accomplished during the first staff meeting of the year and then abandoned for the following twelve months.

Ethical Considerations

In qualitative educational research, it is important that the participant has a sense of being valued, not only as a professional but also as a person. Being listened to is an affirming experience. Having another attempt to understand one's realities, truths, and ideas is potentially a very fulfilling experience.

Part of valuing participants in qualitative research is respecting and safeguarding confidentiality and dignity. Within qualitative investigation there exists what Weber (1986) refers to as the,

> *...paradoxical nature of the interview. The interview is private and confidential, but it is also social and public...In accepting the interviewer's invitation to conversation, the participant is thus showing great trust and hope:...hope that the interviewer will be faithful to the experience and to the participant, not misinterpreting, misrepresenting, or distorting the participant's meaning and intentions, not revealing publicly that which by its very nature should remain private; in other words, not betraying the trust displayed in accepting the invitation* (p.67).

Therefore, in maintaining good faith, it is critical that the researcher return interpreted data to the participant to ensure authentic representation and renewed authorization regarding what may be publicly viewed and what should remain restricted. Participation in this study was strictly voluntary, and pseudonyms were given to ensure anonymity. Individual participants signed a letter of informed consent (Appendix B) at the outset of the on site research, but were also given the option of withdrawing from the study at any time. Ethical guidelines for research involving people were addressed to the appropriate committee prior to the commencement of the study.

The invitation to participate (Appendix C) must be a genuine one to experience an

interchange, a conversation between two people who will hopefully leave the encounter with more than they came; a deeper appreciation of one another as well as new knowledge about the topic they discussed. The interviewer must use a careful awareness that they do not merely view the participant as a means to an end; specifically, the successful completion of a research activity.

Transcribed conversation is not without limitations, easily becoming linear; devoid of the meaningful gestures, intonations, and pauses which enriched it in real life. There is a fine line between capturing the "flavour" of the exchange and unduly weighing down the reader of the text. It is critical that the researcher use discretion combined with the confirmation of the participant.

There is risk in hermeneutic exchange, as the interviewer must reveal something of himself or herself rather than take the stance of dispassionate observer who holds neutral opinions and ideas on the topic. It requires the researcher to share in the experience to the degree that is appropriate. As Merton (1961) so fluently expressed, *If I give you my truth but do not receive your truth in return, then there can be no truth between us.* This may require the researcher not only to engage in discussion with participants, but at times to also be a part of the situation; to take the role of a *participant observer* (Spradley, 1980). Thus, hermeneutic inquiry shifts the balance of power from being totally in the hands of the researcher to being one of shared control.

Chapter 4
SITE DESCRIPTION

Setting the Research Context

Bisset School, an Edmonton Public School, is located in a fairly new neighbourhood established around twelve years ago in southeast Edmonton. As a school within this district, Bisset operates within the site-based management model and guidelines of the Edmonton Public Schools. This management design has traditionally allowed schools considerable latitude in the teaching strategies which are employed, the means for reporting of student progress, the purchase of curriculum resource materials, and organization for instruction.

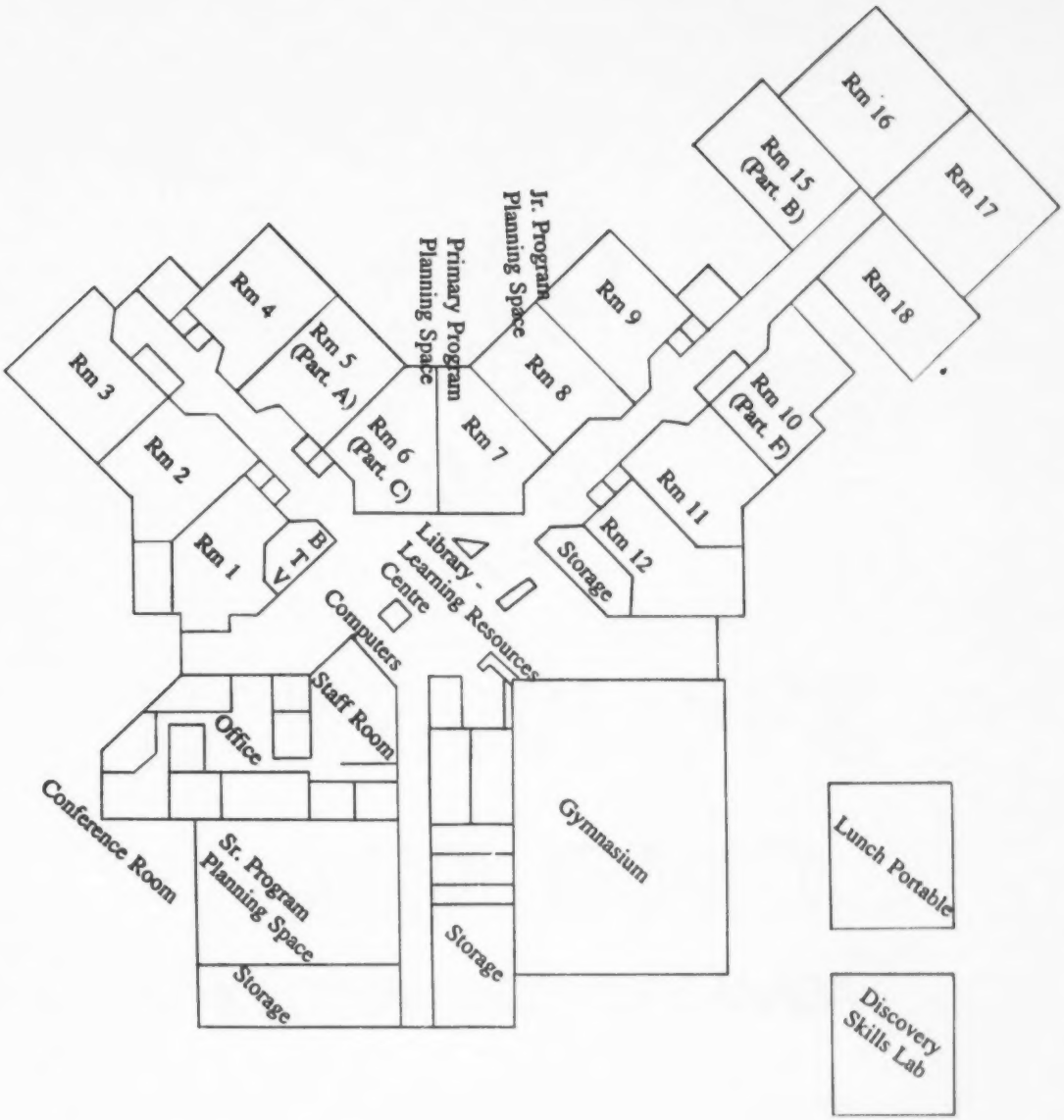
Bisset School was opened in 1989 and students began working in the actual site in February of 1990 after being temporarily accommodated in another building while construction was concluded. A plan of the actual building is found on the following page (Figure 2, *Floorplan of Bisset School*).

When entering Bisset, the first thing that greets the visitor's eyes is a substantial collection of 42 enlarged colour photographs of Bisset students at work and at play. The school banner and two large bears ("J.J." and "Grandpa Mac") are featured just inside the doors of the main entrance. "J.J." (Judge Junior) is the school's official mascot. He is titled so for the school's namesake, the city's first Family Court judge and a former provincial Juvenile Court magistrate. The symbol of the bear is seen throughout the school, including on banners and on the classroom door placards indicating room numbers. The school colours of burgundy and pink are also integrated into the building's decor and furniture.

The open air design and expansive ceiling windows of the library (the centre of the school) provide much natural lighting which promotes a cheery atmosphere as one enters the main part of the building. Children's artwork and writing line the walls of the library and the halls that lead from this central location toward the classrooms.

A feature wall in the library sports a rainbow spanning approximately twenty feet in

FIGURE 2
FLOORPLAN OF BISSET SCHOOL



width and eight feet in height. The rainbow is created by coloured pieces of paper in the shapes of bears, suns, hands, angels, children, and boats. Each paper shape contains a message hand written by a student; goals and positive, pro-social communications are the prominent themes.

Another wall off the library contains historical information and photographs about the school and its namesake, while yet another wall summarizes the school's five key behavioral expectations as defined by the students: *safety comes first, use words to solve your problems, be polite, show consideration for everyone*. The school motto, "Bisset Kids Make Better Choices" is depicted in several places.

Other evidence of the school culture, although not readily apparent when walking through the premises, includes two school songs (*Happy To Be Me* and *This School is Your School, This School is My School*). Regular assemblies for students and staff are scheduled for every Friday afternoon. These represent opportunities for students to sharing writing, reading, singing, information, and successes, as well as being times to promote themes, special events, and school spirit. Literature and the library may be a focus of an assembly, and it may also be an occasion to foster pro-social messages.

During the research process of interviewing individual teachers, the participants made the following comments about the school and their experiences there.

> "*I'm glad I work here. It's a really good place to be because I've learned and grown a lot. The people are super. I don't think I'll ever find a place like this again with this many people who are so awesome, so nice to work with. It's a great place* (C/95/05/15).
>
> "*We all know that this is a unique situation, that it's the only time in our careers that this is going to happen* (C/95/05/18)."
>
> "*It's totally child-centred and it's where I want to be. There's a sense of joy about learning and there's a sense of having common goals, knowing what direction we're all going. I think it makes a big difference when the staff as a whole have a common vision, a common goal, and a common philosophical foundation* (A/95/04/25)."

> *"Opening the school (and remaining on staff) has been a great experience. This school is a gem. It's so innovative, always on the cutting edge. We have a brilliant administrator and an incredible staff. There's a really tremendous atmosphere in the school; it's positive. We have incredibly tight ties with the parents groups...*
>
> *"This is the most child-centred school I've ever been in. It's also the most focused on student responsibility...*
>
> *"Those are some of the reasons that people love to work here and why people who visit here often times walk out saying, 'Are there any openings?' The few people on staff who have left here have found that it's been incredibly hard for them to go* (F/95/06/09)."
>
> *"This is a progressive school, and we are here to teach because we have a strength or gift in the area, we like kids, and we know how to communicate. We only want the kids to be winners* (B/95/05/08)."

Demographics of Students and Staff. Approximately 380 students of diverse cultural and economic backgrounds now attend the school. Students' academic and social abilities also vary, and the school is a district site for a program fo behaviour disordered children. The collective level of student achievement is seen to be consistent with students' abilities, learning profiles, and backgrounds.

There are nineteen teaching staff with various levels of professional experience and backgrounds, a full time principal, and a curriculum coordinator who also teaches part time in the school. Two program aides, two secretaries, a clerk-typist, and a custodian and custodial assistant complement the Bisset staffing assignments. There is a relatively low rate of turn over in staffing, with many of the original staff members still working at the school. In a written portrait of the school, the principal described the staff as,

> *a warm, supportive, caring, happy, enthusiastic, cohesive team of people... ongoing learners* (who) *offer their expertise in assessment, language arts (literature base), pro-social, cooperative learning, reflective practice, research projects, integrated learning, innovative problem solving,* (and) *collaboration.*

In the same depiction, the principal also stressed the importance of the staff's *modelling*

of important values (and) strategies.

Practices of Bisset School

Descriptions of the educational practices of the school can be subdivided into eight aspects: purpose of education, curriculum orientations, teaching strategies and expectations, learning and the role of the learner, assessment and reporting of student progress, the role of parents, curriculum resource materials, and organization for learning. Because Bisset's administration has endeavoured to make the site a researching school, information about their association with the local university (from the staff handbook and from researcher observations) has also been included.

Purpose of Education.

> "*To prepare kids for the future, to help them become critical thinkers, creative thinkers, logical thinkers, to be problem solvers with the life skills to cope in the future; that is all part of education. They need to know that they are part of a community of learners and they need to know how to learn effectively. We also try to instill the values of caring, respecting, understanding, sharing, growing together, and living in harmony. Part of the students' role is to take on some responsibility themselves. That carries on into the whole of life, becoming responsible citizens. We want them to take all of the that into the larger community and into the their futures* (A/95/05/10)."

This statement, made by one of the participants in the study, summarizes the collective view of the Bisset staff regarding the purpose of education. The staff begin each school year by reading professional articles featuring discussion of the purpose of education.

Curriculum Orientations. Described by the staff and administration as a school that "always has room for change and new ideas", a unique trait of Bisset is its collective view of the curriculum. This year the school embarked on a pilot project to redefine its perspective on curriculum and concluded that the provincial requirements could be synthesized into four major skill areas: *communication, research, interpersonal,* and *discovery.* A fifth domain, *problem solving*, could then be interwoven with any of the preceding four areas. This curricular landscape was regarded by the staff as encompassing all subject areas for each level of the graded curriculum.

School wide themes identified for the 1994-95 term included "Leaders" (September through November), "Peacemakers" (December through March) and "Heroes" (April through June). During the period of data collection for this study, a large mural in the library portraying the Earth surrounded by the words *Ourselves, Each Other,* and *Our Earth* focused on student goals under the themes of "Reaching Out to Others", "Choose the Right", "Making Goals is Fun", and "Encouraging Others".

Teaching Strategies and Expectations. It is a mandate of Bisset School that the teaching strategies of the staff be aligned with the district's Principles of Learning and Instruction. These include:

- All students can learn.
- Each student is a unique individual.
- Students must experience challenge and success.
- Learning involves development of the individual.
- Learning is an active process.
- Learning is an individual process.

A variety of teaching strategies are used by the staff, including direct instruction, cooperative learning, and whole language techniques (e.g., journal writing, morning message, novel studies, shared reading, daily reading and writing, research and reporting, book publishing). There is an emphasis on ensuring that teaching is synchronized with the school's philosophy, as noted in the staff handbook:

> *It is important that our actual practices and activities reflect and are responsive to our philosophy and language learning policy in every program.*

Additional information about the expectations for teaching at Bisset is found in the school's handbook.

1. *Active involvement in the research process as a researcher* (teacher as researcher).
2. *Reflective practitioners.*
3. *Collaborative relationships.*
4. *Complimentary planning and teaching.*
5. *Everyone practices leadership.*
6. *Interactions with all children are supportive.*

7. *Interactions with parents are positive and demonstrate an understanding of individual situation and their child.*
8. *Interactions with all staff are professional.*
9. *Provide excellent instructional programs.*
10. *Decision-making is a shared responsibility.*
11. *Bisset is a child centred active school where children experience success by being appropriately challenged in a demanding yet safe, secure environment (Thinking, Learning, Creating).*
12. *When in doubt...Is my decision or action in the best interest of the child?*
13. *Our beliefs are practised. "The function of intelligence is more essential than the form intelligence takes." - substance over image.*
14. *A vision for learning - acquiring wisdom.*
15. *Wisdom: the ability to see what needs doing, effectively doing it without being told.*

Learning and the Role of the Learner. As noted previously on page 60 of this dissertation, there is a focus on students developing citizenship skills and taking responsibility for their learning and behaviour. Their participation in establishing the school's behavioral expectations emphasizes this.

Their is a common belief amongst the staff that the terms "teaching" and "learning" should always be considered together.

Following this line of thought, the staff and administration have striven to make Bisset an *"inviting school"* as described by Sergiovanni (1990).

> *An intentionally inviting school is one within which educators consciously shape their behaviours and the environment of the school to invite students' success. A broad-based commitment to this idea within the school has implications for almost everything that goes on. Teachers, for example, need to be sure that the lessons they prepare and provide to students are interesting and challenging and invite them to learn. The school environment needs to extend to students an invitation to learn* (p. 65-66).

In working towards this ideal of the inviting school, the staff have developed a seven point list of assumptions about learning under the banner of *Facilitating Effective Learning and Teaching (FELT).*

1. *Knowledge is acquired through active construction or building*

processes involving student action and the investment of attention (Cobb, 1986; Steffe, 1990).

2. *The knowledge constructed includes several components: 'cognitive knowledge' (concepts, explanations, procedures), 'cognitive processes' (ways of learning, thinking, reasoning), 'affective knowledge' (beliefs and attitudes about an idea, how it is learned, and as a learner) (Hiebert, 1986; Kloosterman, 1988).*

3. *Students are more likely to be motivated to learn when they believe that they can learn and have framed appropriate goals or challenges for learning (Ames, 1992).*

4. *The type of knowledge constructed is influenced by the student's motives and purposes for learning and the extent of engagement in learning (Biggs & Tefler, 1987).*

5. *Students learn or construct knowledge by using what they already know about the topic being learned, the learning process and themselves as learners (Fincher-Kiefer, Post, Greene, & Voss, 1988; Holmes, 1984; Langer, 1984; Mudd, 1987).*

6. *Learning strategies are the actions or procedures that students initiate to construct knowledge; in other words, what one does to learn. Learners can add to the repertoire of strategies and, as a consequence, can improve their performance and efficiency (Elis, Deschler, Lenz, Schumaker, & Clark, 1991).*

7. *Learners differ in their preferred cognitive styles; this includes the strategies that they employ to construct a particular idea, the schematic knowledge that they bring to the learning situation, their ability to process information, their level of motivation and the ways in which they allocate attention (Riding & Douglas, 1993).*

Assessment and Reporting of Student Progress. There are three primary criteria the Bisset staff utilize in relation to assessment practices; specifically that these practices be in line with how students learn, with instructional practices, and with the school's programming. There is a stress on providing students with standards and criteria for meeting those standards. Assessment is viewed as being an ongoing process that involves the collaborative efforts of teachers, students, and parents.

This collaboration extends to the reporting of student progress, with student led

conferencing and student/parent reflections on progress being an integral component of the reporting process.

The portfolio is a highly significant artifact in coming to understand the assessing and reporting processes used by the Bisset staff. The maturation of the portfolio process evolved over a period of five years, beginning with the development of the school's collective educational philosophy and a second philosophical statement, *Communicating About Student Learning* from the staff handbook.

> *Communicating about student learning...must include programming, observing, reflecting, conferencing, and planning. The portfolio, as part of this process, is the focal point of the collaborative involvements of children, parents, and teachers in the learning-teaching journey.*

It is intended that the information gathered through assessment and contained in the portfolio will form the foundation for programming decisions and will assist in individualizing instruction to meet students' needs. As one participant noted,

> *"Allowing students to express their knowing in different ways automatically accommodates for different learning styles. Making spaces where they can express their learning in different and creative ways is part of the teacher's role...*
>
> *"It's also our job to understand the learning continuum and to provide students with the kind of programming that they need to be successful and to grow so that they see themselves as learners. That is connected with self-esteem and that is part of our philosophy* (A/95/05/10)."

During the research for this dissertation, Bisset was one of five schools selected by the American based *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development* to be a site for the production of a video on assessment and reporting practices. The video is to be used as a professional development tool for North American teachers.

Role of Parents. Parental involvement at a variety of levels within the school is both valued and encouraged. There exists an emphasis on parents as partners in the educational process and a commitment to bridging spaces between home, the larger community, and school. Parental support and volunteer participation are seen as essential elements to the effective running of the school. The staff perceive that parents contribute

many gifts, talents, and considerable knowledge to their various roles within Bisset.

> *"Parents not only feel like they're part of the school; they really are. Their input is really heartfelt. We want the parents involved. Not only are their opinions valued; they're valued. With their involvement, we get a better variety of ideas* (F/95/06/09)."

Curriculum Resource Materials. The Library-Learning Resources Centre houses many of the school's resource materials. The teacher librarian assists teachers in assembling materials for specific units that are being covered in classrooms as well as helping to organize materials for school-wide themes. A cross-referencing system in the library computer also aids teachers in finding materials on a particular topic.

In addition to containing a wide selection of literature for teachers, children, and parents, the library also accommodates a publishing house for student work which can then be added to the school's collection.

Although there is an array of different types of resource materials, there is a focus on literature. In comparison with other schools that participants had worked at, they characterized the school's selection of teaching resources as relatively small. Workbooks are virtually non-existent, and the teachers rely much more on materials that they have collected or made themselves.

> *"Almost all of the resources in this room are mine. I think that owning your own materials is fairly important because resources reflect your teaching style. I am quite committed to what I do, and so are the materials that I collect. It becomes how you teach. Besides books, because we are a literature based school, we don't have a lot of materials that guide you along (e.g. teachers' guides, workbooks). I think that those kinds of materials can influence how you teach. We don't have a lot of those, and that does encourage you to grow more as a teacher* (B/95/05/08)."

All teachers who participated on the individual level of this study stressed a preference for materials and lessons or tasks that they had designed themselves.

Organization for Learning. The school's organization is characterized by three clusters of student groupings: the primary program (students aged 5, 6, and 7 years that are in their kindergarten, first, or second years of schooling), the junior program (students

aged 8 and 9 years that are in their third or fourth years of schooling), and the senior program (students aged 10, 11, and 12 years that are in their fifth and sixth years of schooling). Except for unusual circumstances, students remain with the same teacher, in the same room, for two consecutive years.

> "*We honour the differences in kids. We put them together for a couple of years with the same teacher in a consistent environment and we honour where they're at, knowing that they may be at different places with different strengths and difficulties. There are benefits for the younger children being with the older ones, and the older ones still can move ahead further, faster. My job is to provide a program that will allow for diversity and broadness based on individual needs, but within the parameters of the program* (B/95/05/08)."

Teachers do a good deal of collaborative planning and decision making with colleagues that are within their particular program as well as participating in whole staff processes. Regular, program specific meetings are scheduled by the teachers in addition to the whole staff meetings that occur every two weeks.

University Partnerships. The bi-monthly staff meetings typically include information sharing, discussion, an element of professional development, and time for reflective journal writing by the entire staff. The content of this writing is at times directed by the principal and at other occasions the topic is left to individual choice. Some of this writing is shared and some remains private.

There is an emphasis on reflective practice which extends staff meetings. It is actively encouraged by the school's administration and is a substantial component of annual performance reviews. To help the staff achieve this goal, a teaching partnership with a recognized expert in the area of reflective practice (Dr. Jean Clandinin) was initiated. This alliance represents one of two such partnerships that have been formally forged by this school with the University of Alberta.

Another coupling with the University is found in the junior teaching partners program. Three students from the Faculty of Education are selected each year. Two of the students for this school term were assigned to the primary program, while the third worked with the junior program.

A Final Descriptor. When asked to project what the school would look like three years from now, the principal noted,

> *A school where the spirit of learning can be captured and promoted - where children are making and taking decisions which promote our school philosophy.*

It is from this statement that one begins to appreciate the emphasis that is placed on educational philosophy at Bisset School. The significance ascribed to teachers' individual and collective educational philosophies is examined more closely in the following pages of this inquiry.

Chapter 5

FINDINGS: CURRICULUM RESOURCE MATERIALS REFLECTING EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Introduction to the Chapter

Bisset School, as an educational institution within the district of Edmonton Public Schools, is governed by a site-based management policy that has evolved within the district over the past two decades. Essentially, this has allowed Bisset to cultivate its own educational philosophy, make decisions related to expenditures, and to develop its own organizational culture within district parameters.

The study of Bisset's curriculum resource materials and the processes used to select those materials (by individuals, a small group, and the whole staff) provide a departure point for greater insight into the overall workings and culture of the school.

Site-Based Management

A basic tenet of the site-based management model is that those who are responsible for specific results should be in position to contribute to or make decisions directly related to the achievement of those results. It is intended that such involvement be more than superficial; it must be genuine and grounded in authority to make meaningful determinations.

> *School-centred decision making...genuinely involves people in the organization who will be responsible for decisions made. Research on school-centred decision making indicates that... schools that are given a large degree of latitude in allocating funds can accomplish their mission better through more effective resource utilization* (Whitaker & Moses, 1994: p.63-64).

Within Edmonton Public Schools, this has a direct bearing on the district's budgeting process.

The Budgeting Process. School administrators, teachers, support staff, and parents

all participate in the development of the budget documents for Edmonton Public Schools. In addition to requesting amounts of money calculated on the basis of the size and make-up of the student population and school needs, these documents outline statements of results and indicators of the achievement of those results. After being accepted by the Superintendent, budget documents are formally presented to the Board of Trustees of Edmonton Public Schools for approval. It is from the funds granted through this process that the school must pay salaries, maintain the building, provide programming, and purchase supplies, services, and curriculum resource materials. Maehr & Buck (1993) summarize the connection between budgets and the disbursement of funds allocated on the basis of these documents.

> *Budgets reflect goals; expenditures reflect values. What an organization believes and wants to do is reflected in the way it uses its resources. The more obvious use of resources involves what can be directly bought: computers, texts, science equipment, library books...the array of resources purchased as well as the way they are distributed determine and reflect the culture of the school* (p.49-50).

The 1994 budget documents for Bisset School reflected these ideas. The connections between goals and values, and between philosophy and practice were specifically identified at various points in the document. Although not all results statements included reference to philosophy, the following eight points exhibited this linkage.

> ° *The school philosophy will be demonstrated in teaching-learning practices which will provide programming options for students.*
> ° *All students, staff, parents and representative community will continue to create a learning environment reflective of our school philosophy.*
> ° *All staff will communicate with parents the school philosophy and how their role supports and promotes student learning.*
> ° *Students, staff, and parents will be involved in brainstorming activities which will promote and foster the school philosophy statement.*
> ° *Our school culture will continue to reflect our school philosophy statement.*
> ° *School organization and practices will continue to be congruent with collective staff beliefs as stated in the school philosophy.*
> ° *Staff meeting topics will address:...putting our philosophy into practice.*
> ° *A format will be developed to ensure that our assessment practices are consistent with our philosophy and programming.*

These statements were developed by the Bisset staff with suggestions from the parent advisory council. They were also reviewed by additional parents from the community.

Decision Making Within a Site-Based Management Model. As previously noted, a fundamental principle of this style of management is that those who are accountable for specific results should have the authority to make decisions related to those outcomes. There is a body of research which indicates that such involvement has many positive results.

In studies that directly asked teachers whether or not they considered that they should be implicated in decision making processes associated with teaching responsibilities, several researchers found affirmative responses (Mohrman, Cooke, & Mohrman, 1978; Bacharach, Bauer, & Shedd, 1986; Corcoran, 1987; Bacharach, Bamberger, Conley, & Bauer, 1990). Participating in such decision making has been found to correlate positively with teachers' feelings of job satisfaction and professionalism. Studies by Thierbach (1980), Flannery (1980), Warner (1981), and Conway (1984) support these findings. Bacharach, Conley, and Bauer (1986) linked opportunities for teachers to make job related decisions with lower incidence of stress and burn out. Daft & Becker (1978), Runkel & Harris (1983), and Berman & McLaughlin (1980) all found that teachers are much more likely to accept and implement change if they have had some voice in the decisions leading up to that change. Finally, Sergiovanni (1991) linked the effectiveness of schools to teachers' opportunities for decision making.

> *Feelings of empowerment among teachers contribute to ownership and increase commitment and motivation to work. In successful schools organizational structures enhance empowerment among teachers* (p.61).

Bisset's Processes for Selecting Curriculum Resource Materials

Bisset's processes for selecting curriculum resource materials (by individual participants, by a small group, and by the whole staff) were characterized by four features: curricular purpose, investigating possible choices through a variety of sources (including making one's own resource materials), **consistency with the educational**

philosophy of the school, and making choices collaboratively.

The use of the school's educational philosophy as a touchstone for selecting curriculum resource materials and for making other practical decisions was a norm and an expectation established early in the life of Bisset and has continued to the present time. This tenet was reiterated in the researcher's interactions with individuals on staff and in observations of small group and whole staff meetings.

Relying on one's own personal inventory of resource materials, sharing with others and pooling materials, and creating resources to meet needs as they arose were common responses to curriculum resource requirements.

Bisset's Curriculum Resource Materials Collection. Participants in the study indicated that, in comparison with other schools they had previously taught at, Bisset owned relatively few curriculum resource materials in the way of class sets of textbooks (or other single resources) or multiple copies of teachers' manuals. Workbooks have not been used. Rather, monies have been invested in a large literature collection covering many topics. The fact that literature holds, by design, a great significance in the way of resources has resulted in the library becoming a focal point in the school for Bisset's teachers, administrators, students, and parents.

In addition to books for children and the staff, there is a professional section in the library which contains binders organized by themes and curricular focuses, each housing ideas that the teachers have compiled from successful classroom experiences. Other professional books on a diversity of educational issues are also available. As well, there is an area containing resources on topics of interest to parents (e.g. single parenting, teaching children responsibility, learning to read, first aid, confidence building, sibling rivalry, motivation, social skills, and academic achievement).

History of Curriculum Resource Materials Acquisitions. The original start up budget established for the construction and equipping of Bisset School included money for the purchase of curriculum resource materials. It was at the discretion of the administration and staff of the school as to which resources would be acquired with the funds. The school's resource selection practices can be traced to the opening of the school and the original staff's and administration's belief that textbooks and other

commercially produced resources should not determine the content and delivery of programs. Rather, it was decided that a wide variety of literature should act as the primary resources for teaching. This particular plan meant that they staff did not have to choose between having a library collection and having curriculum resource materials, which is often the case in new schools.

In addition, it was decided that if the teachers were indeed going to follow their beliefs that differences between learners should be accommodated, it would be necessary to avoid standardized textbooks and other resources of that nature. Individualized programming to meet a range of student needs, learning rates, and learning styles could not, in their collective opinion, be achieved with resources that displayed grade labels. Organizing students by year in school as opposed to by grade level would also not mesh with the employment of standardized, graded texts as a stigma would certainly be attached for example to the "grade six" student who would be working from a "grade three" math text. Rather, the staff wished to use a multiplicity of resources and encourage students to do the same, modelling the concept that curriculum resource materials are tools for learning and for gathering information.

In an interview with Patricia, an original staff member and the school's curriculum coordinator and teacher-librarian, the following points were made with regard to how the original curriculum resource materials were chosen.

> *"Initially, we did an awful lot of work on school philosophy and looking at how we could implement that philosophy. One of the ways of implementing that, of course, is acquiring (curriculum) resources that are consistent with the philosophy.*
>
> *"I think that those of us that started, and even today, have had such similar philosophical backgrounds that it was easy to sit down and pull materials from our prior work, from our prior experiences. I think that we drew on our background experiences to acquire the materials to support the kind of program that we wanted to have in place.*
>
> *"It's been wonderful working with others who have such similar philosophies. I think that opening a new school with a principal that has influence and who is able to select staff that are philosophically consistent with the orientation of the new school is a key point. Through her contacts and experiences with a number of people in a number of places,*

> *Sue had that awareness. She did a wonderful job selecting staff* (D/95/05/08)."

Curriculum Resource Materials Selections by Individual Participants. Literature was the primary type of resource that was identified in discussions with the individual participants of the study (Mary, Kathy, Sally, Marvin). Next to literature, all four of these teachers expressed a preference for resource materials which they had made themselves. Descriptors such as *best, productive, most* (used), and *tailored* (to meet student needs and/or the orientation of the lesson) were used in the repertory grid analysis to characterize materials that they themselves had personally created or had garnered from colleagues who had developed them.

As well, all four spoke of the practical importance of utilizing educational philosophy when making decisions about choices of curriculum resource materials. Sally spoke of how her teaching experiences at Bisset have helped shape the pragmatic role that educational philosophy now holds for her and how this helps her to meet the growing demands of teaching.

> *"Teaching is speeding up, but I have my philosophy pretty firmly in place. If you didn't have a real strong philosophy, I think that you could just be ordering the simplest math books, or running to Moyers and photocopying this or that or the other thing. I think it could be easier to slip into that kind of pattern as you get busier if you're not really firm about your philosophy.*
>
> *"If I am picking a resource, I always think of my philosophy. That's been a gradual process, and my philosophy has become more and more a part of me. At first, I didn't even know what a philosophy was. Now, I'm really very aware of it.*
>
> *"But I'm very much aware of it at this school, too, because we do talk about philosophy a lot and we make sure things fit in. It's not like my other school where a philosophy statement was developed and then I never heard about it again, nor did any of the decisions that we made refer back to our philosophy. Nobody ever said in a staff meeting, 'Hey, wait a minute! How does that fit in with our philosophy?' Here, they do. So, I'm very much more aware of philosophy just being here; because of Sue.*
>
> *"People here really know their (own) philosophies. I've been at other schools where there's been a school philosophy and then some of the*

> *teachers had their own (individual) philosophies, but they didn't mesh. Here, the teachers' (individual) philosophies and the school's (group) philosophy are very compatible.*
>
> *"In some schools, there's a real kind of child-centred, caring, wonderful philosophy, but there are teachers on those staffs that don't have those beliefs at all, and they don't follow the school philosophy in their classrooms. Those teachers don't even consider that they need to be part of the philosophy. They think that it's just for the school, not for their own classrooms.*
>
> *"The principal makes the big difference by hiring people who agree with the school's philosophy, and by talking about the philosophy so much and making sure that things are fitting in with the philosophy* (C/95/05/15)."

Curriculum Resource Materials Selections by the Small Group. During the period of data collection, the researcher was invited to attend a planning meeting during which the primary team designed their final unit of the school year using the curricular theme of "Japan". The seven teachers and one programme aide met after school in the home of one of the teachers, bringing with them binders of ideas and materials that they had collected, photographs of students working on "Japan" units from previous years, and samples of other curriculum resource materials for sharing. The meeting lasted approximately five hours, with a dinner break at the midpoint when food was delivered.

During the course of the evening, it became evident that the teachers and the programme aide within the group did indeed have very similar philosophical orientations regarding teaching and learning. Ideas that emphasized hands-on learning, active participation, meeting a range of student needs, capturing students' interests, and bringing meaning to students' educational experiences that supported provincial curriculum requirements were the focus of discussion. Curriculum resource materials that were selected were congruent with these beliefs. While there were some differences in individual teachers' plans for approaching the actual activities, there was consensus on what materials would be utilized.

When asked to comment on the likenesses within the group, the teachers indicated that they believed that the principal had chosen them to be on the staff because they would mesh philosophically. When asked how they would deal with a new member to

the group who would not "fit in", the teachers expressed confidence that the principal would not allow this to happen. However, if it were to happen, they indicated that they would be willing to work with the new person, share, and assist him or her to adapt. They also expressed that, because the norms of the group were so strong and that the expectation that they work collaboratively was so clear, it would be very difficult for a new person to simply follow his or her own direction should it differ from the philosophical direction of the larger group.

Through observing this session and having the opportunity to question the teachers, the school's emphasis on collegiality and congeniality became more evident. By creating the conditions whereby interdependence was, in effect, a required way of life for the staff, the school's administration had captured an element of what Sergiovanni refers to as *value-added leadership.*

> *The emphasis on human relations management has resulted in the value of congeniality becoming very strong in the way schools are managed and led. Congeniality has to do with the climate of interpersonal relationships in an enterprise. When this climate is friendly, agreeable, and sympathetic, congeniality is high...*
>
> *Collegiality has to do with the extent to which teachers and principals share common work values, engage in specific conversation about their work, and help each other engage in the work of the school. Value-added leadership views congeniality as a by-product of building strong collegiality norms in the school and not as an end in itself* (Sergiovanni, 1990: p.23-24).

With this perspective in mind, the wisdom in acquiring fewer commercially developed curriculum resources and class sets of texts with accompanying teachers' manuals and other single resources as opposed to acquiring multiple sets of a wide array of materials became clearer. If enough materials were provided to make every teacher essentially self sufficient, there would be much less need for collaboration or collegiality. As well, the focus on the common philosophical base, as the tie that binds the group together, would not be so necessary.

Curriculum Resource Materials Selections by Whole Staff. As indicated in

chapter 3 (see *Data Collection*), this research was intentionally timed to coincide with what is commonly a period in the school year when curriculum resource materials are purchased; specifically, the latter part of April through June.

Prior to beginning the data collection, it was anticipated that small group or whole staff meetings related to the selection of curriculum resource materials for the coming September would likely take place. It was also considered quite possible that at least one publisher or content area consultant would visit the school to provide samples of resource materials for viewing and purchase. None of these scenarios occurred.

When questioned about this, Patricia responded:

> *"Choosing resource materials is an ongoing process here, with more happening at some times than others. In some schools, there may be a lot of ordering of new materials in May and June, particularly if they are using a lot of workbooks. Those need to be ordered then to be in place for September. Because we are not workbook oriented, that is not a concern for us.*
>
> *"As well, I, as a classroom teacher, do not know for sure the needs of the kids that I might have next year. Sometimes, after you get to know those kids and their needs, then you have to order more appropriate materials. You've got to provide that leeway to satisfy that need as it arises, rather than ordering it all right now and having it ready in advance. Because if you order it all now, you'll be fitting the kids and the program into the materials; that's not our philosophy* (D/95/05/08)."

When asked to comment further on the whole staff decisions regarding curriculum resource materials selections, Patricia noted the following:

> *"I think there are a variety of ways of choosing resource materials. But first of all, becoming aware of the curriculum is absolutely essential. You need to have a purpose which stems from a curricular area or theme. Looking at what we currently have, investigating catalogues, talking with teachers in other places; these are all ways of choosing. Conferences are critical. They are wonderful places to get initial contact with new materials, to talk with other people. Attending conference sessions that discuss the use of materials for study on a particular topic is very helpful. I think that the staff provide alternatives or other choices for materials that can be made.*
>
> *"There is an awful lot of thought put in over, and over, and over again*

> *with regard to whatever happens in this building. The purchase of resource materials is one of those things. There is a lot of thought given to what is going to be purchased or brought into the school. Is it usable? Is it consistent with the philosophy? There is a high degree of congruence or alignment with the philosophy.*
>
> *"I've been in schools where teachers have been given a certain amount of money to spend as individuals until it's gone. Maybe that's where the impulse shopping takes over. Maybe that comes from that style of budgeting and an attitude that says, 'We know that there is a pool of money to be used, and we will use it as we see fit. We know it's there, it's an amount given to us; go spend.' We don't use that system here. There's always somebody else that you're talking to, discussing expenditures with. The communication and collaboration makes it all more valid.*
>
> *"If you look at buying materials, it's really problem solving, isn't it? You want to acquire the use of whatever is best to get the point across. To choose after sitting down with somebody and talking it out is problem solving regarding which materials are most appropriate. That communication, that collaboration, that sharing that takes place all help to clarify the validity and the degree to which something might be appropriate* (D/95/05/08)."

The four criteria described by Patricia (curricular purpose, investigating choices through a variety of sources [including making one's own materials], consistency with the educational philosophy of the school, and making choices collaboratively) were congruous with comments made by the individual participants during interviews and in observations of small group selection processes.

Conflict in the Selection of Curriculum Resource Materials. During discussions with individual and small group participants, the researcher introduced a series of curriculum resource materials that would clearly not be suitable to the Bisset context. The purpose in deliberately bringing these materials into the conversation was to establish a "What if...?" scenario that would require a response to conflicting philosophic perspectives.

Patricia addressed the question as one of growth rather than as one of unresolvable incompatibility.

> *"When a teacher comes to a school, they come with their own 'baggage'; and that can be positive or negative. If we had someone come that was*

> *just so different in their approach and in the materials that they were using in their room (for example, from a very traditional teaching background), I would inquire as to what they were trying to achieve. I think I would probably be very careful at that point to take a look at the resources that we do have here and then attempt to sit down with that new person and discuss ways of using the materials that would be consistent with our philosophy. It could be me, it could be Sue, or it could be a team member working with that person. This is where I find that Bisset is probably a really unique place, because it could be any one of us taking that role.*
>
> *"We believe that we take kids from where they are and stretch them as far as possible. That applies to all staff members, as well; whether it's teaching staff, support staff, or custodial staff. It's a process of growth and support. Change comes from that growth* (D/95/05/08)."

Sally noted that the principal plays a pivotal part in maintaining the role that Bisset's educational philosophy has held and continues to hold with regard to the selection of resources.

> *"If I were to ask to buy something, and Sue didn't think it would fit into the philosophy, she would certainly question me. If Sue has to approve the purchase of something, it would have to fit our philosophy first. And if it didn't, she would question you, she would challenge you in terms of the school's philosophy* (C/95/05/15)."

Sue herself reiterated this perspective in a separate interview.

> *"If someone on staff asks me if they can do something, I respond by saying, 'What do you believe about that? Where does it fit?' And if they indicate that it perhaps doesn't fit, I'll ask, 'Is it important to you? Does it follow your beliefs? How are you going to work with that? You still need to be true to yourself'* (E/95/05/10)."

The Significance of Curriculum Resource Materials as Cultural Artifacts

That Bisset's curriculum resource materials are artifacts that, by intent, consistently represent the educational philosophy of the school and its staff is a critical point in understanding the practical use that has been made of their beliefs about what is pedagogically and ethically good, real, and true about teaching and learning. Moreover, these resource materials (as artifacts) and the processes used to select them speak

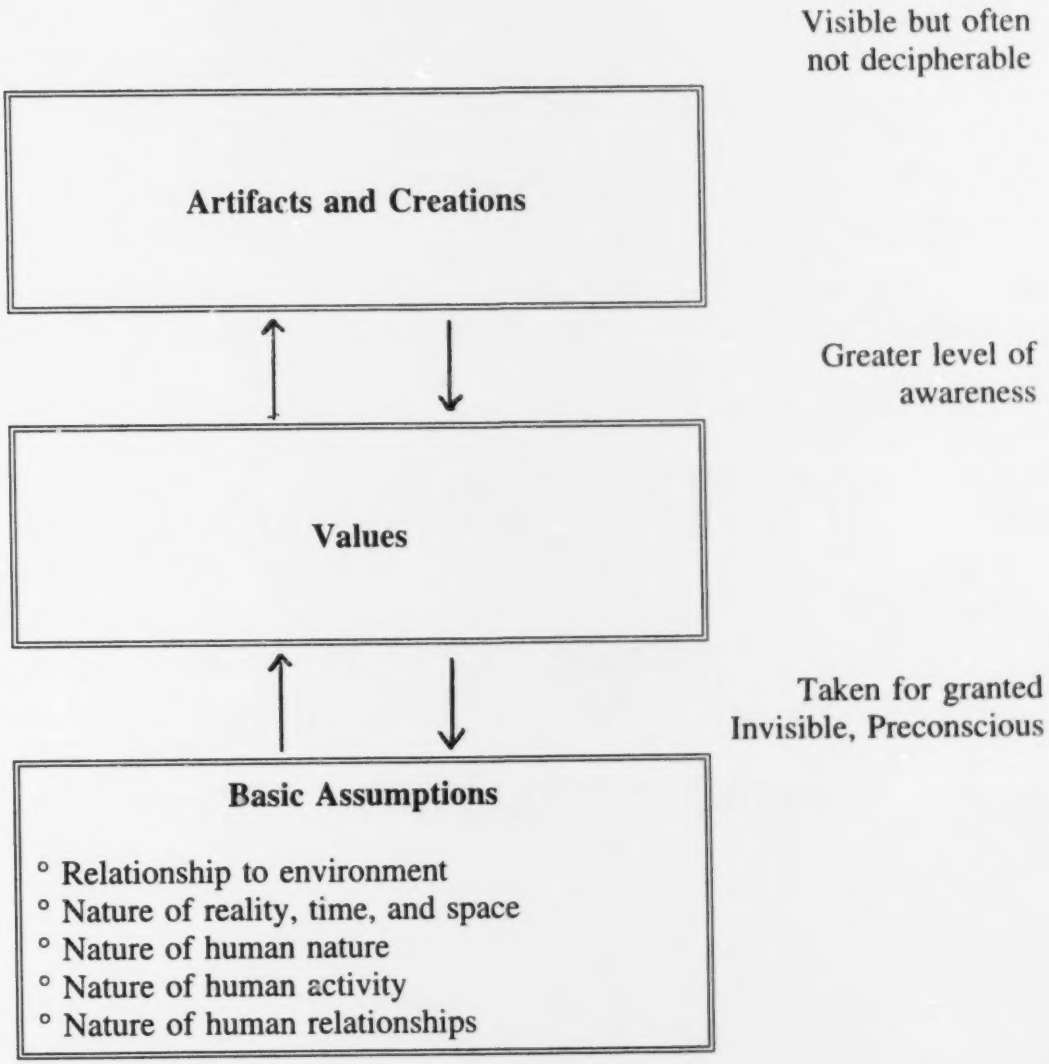
significantly to the broader culture of the school.

Schein (1985) summarizes the connection between *artifacts and creations, values,* and *basic assumptions* of a culture (Figure 3). He maintains that there is a growing level of awareness, with *basic assumptions* operating at a preconscious level interacting with *values* and *artifacts and creations* that are of more conscious plane.

> *The most visible level of the culture is its artifacts and creations - its constructed physical and social environment. At this level one can look at physical space, the technological output of the group, its written and spoken language, artistic productions, and the overt behaviour of its members. Since the insiders of a culture are not necessarily aware of their own artifacts, one cannot always ask about them, but one can always observe them for oneself...If one wants to achieve this level of understanding more quickly, one can attempt to analyze the central values that provide the day-to-day operating principles by which the members of the culture guide their behaviour...*
>
> *Many values remain conscious and are explicitly articulated because they serve the normative or moral function of guiding members of the group in how to deal with certain key situations...A set of values that become embodied in an ideology or organizational philosophy thus can serve as a guide and as a way of dealing with the uncertainty of intrinsically uncontrollable or difficult events. Such values will predict much of the behaviour that can be observed at the artifactual level...If the espoused values are reasonably congruent with the underlying assumptions, then the articulation of those values into a philosophy of operating can be helpful in bringing the group together, serving as a source of identity and core mission* (Schein, 1985: p.14-17).

Applying Schein's theory of levels of culture to Bisset School, there are some interesting parallels, some of which require further investigation in the following chapters. The origin of the school's educational philosophy, for example, stemmed from extensive discussions amongst original staff members about their broader life philosophies (see Chapter 6, *The Interconnectedness of Educational Philosophy*). Schein, although not a philosopher himself, has alluded very strongly to the notion of life philosophy (what is

FIGURE 3
SCHEIN'S LEVELS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND THEIR INTERACTION


Visible but often not decipherable
Artifacts and Creations
Greater level of awareness
Values
Taken for granted Invisible, Preconscious
Basic Assumptions
° Relationship to environment
° Nature of reality, time, and space
° Nature of human nature
° Nature of human activity
° Nature of human relationships

Source: Schein, E. (1985), p.14

considered to be real, good, and true) is his definition of *basic assumptions*.

His second level of culture, *values*, correlates with Bisset's primary philosophical statement and their related, more specific philosophical statements with regard to purpose of education, curriculum, assessment and the reporting of student progress, instruction and the role of the teacher, learning and the role of the learner, the role of parents, organization of the school, and curriculum resource materials (see Chapter 6, *The Interconnectedness of Educational Philosophy*).

How the Bisset staff have come to ascribe such pragmatic significance to their collective educational philosophy is another fundamental question that is also raised from the data presented in this chapter (5) of this dissertation. Chapters 7 and 8 (*Group and Philosophical Maturation,* and *Cultural Leadership*) examine this matter more closely.

In conclusion, discussion of Bisset's curriculum resource materials and their selection invites further deliberation on other integral issues.

Chapter 6

FINDINGS: THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Thinking is an ongoing process, and one of the most beneficial results of the study of educational philosophy is obtained if the student (of educational philosophy) reaches the place where he is unable to think of educational practices in isolation from the basic questions of life and meaning that give those practices significance (Knight, 1989: p.v).

Introduction to the Chapter

During discussions relating to the selection of curriculum resource materials, it was learned that educational philosophy played a fundamental role in these choices for Bisset staff (chapter 5, *Curriculum Resource Materials Reflecting Educational Philosophy*). Furthermore, these discussions revolving around curriculum resource materials also revealed many other aspects of the participants' personal educational philosophies.

A recurring theme in the data collection and analysis was the interconnected nature of educational philosophy. Firstly, it was viewed by participants as being a subset of their broader life philosophies. Secondly, not only was it seen by the Bisset staff and administration as being integral to teaching practice, but it was also perceived that the collective educational philosophy operating in the school encompassed many elements: purpose of schooling, organization of the school, teaching and the role of the teacher, assessment and reporting of student progress, curriculum, learning and the role of the learner, the role of parents, and curriculum resource materials. Like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, these separate aspects linked together to form a coherent whole.

Defining Educational Philosophy and its Value

When asked to define the concept of educational philosophy and its value relative to practice, twelve members of the staff (including the four individual participants, curriculum coordinator, and principal) volunteered to independently respond to a survey of four open ended questions including: *1). What is an educational philosophy? 2). On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being least important and 10 being most important), how important is educational philosophy to your teaching practices?* In addition to providing a broader perspective on the collective meaning ascribed to educational philosophy, the data gathered helped to "position" the individual participants' views in relation to their colleagues' perceptions. All twelve responses with corresponding values are found on the table, *Bisset School Survey Results: What is Educational Philosophy & of What Value is it?* (Table 2).

Although some differences in phrasing are evident, there were three points common to all twelve definitions:

1. Educational philosophy is important and integral to practice.
2. Educational philosophy guides decisions and practice.
3. Educational philosophy is based on one's beliefs.

These commonalities are fundamental to the pragmatic role that educational philosophy has come to play within the school. These points are consistent with Knight's (1989) views on the relevance of educational philosophy to practice.

> *To say that each of us has a philosophy of education and life that we daily act upon does not mean that we have a good (or bad) philosophy, or even a philosophy that we have thought through. Our philosophy may lie at the subliminal level...(However) every educator needs a* ***consciously examined*** *and* ***thoroughly considered*** *philosophy of education if he is to make the most efficient use of both his own time and his students' energy.*
>
> *Too often educators operate out of their philosophic "hip pocket" -they act without having thought about why they act. As a result, they frequently do not achieve as much as they could even though they may have had a "successful" day. It is difficult to arrive at our goal if we do not know the steps that need to be taken to get there. It is equally difficult to decide upon the necessary steps if we are unsure about our goal or destination. A well thought-out philosophy should help even good teachers become*

TABLE 2
BISSET SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS: WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY & OF WHAT VALUE IS IT?

VALUE OF 8	VALUE OF 9	VALUE OF 10
- a set of beliefs that guide what you do in the classroom and how you operate in a school setting - it guides most of the things you do at school; it can't effect everything because of other outside factors (administration, setting, school board policy, etc.) *(Participant H)*	- beliefs upon which children (people) are educated - guides what a teacher (facilitator) will do within an educational setting - outside factors must be considered *(Participant G)*	- beliefs about education, about teaching and learning - a foundation - a basis for making school decisions - guides educational practice - leads school policy - very important - for a teacher/staff to give them direction; very important - part of everything we do and why we do it *(Participant A)*
- beliefs which provide framework for programming offered within a school - (important) in order to offer programs to students which are consistent throughout - guidance which a philosophy provides is invaluable *(Participant I)*		- the "big picture", "the whole", "the structure" - what you value and believe to be important in the long term to guide your ideas, goals, etc. - the leading force - the back bone - motto: "When in doubt, consult your philosophy" - it guides my planning, strategies, individualization, communication, etc. *(Participant B)*
		- a global picture - an attitude - a schema by which everything you do is related - because I do things for a reason and I know 'why' I do things *(Participant C)*

		- beliefs about education and learning that guides all decisions made with respect to education of learners - helps determine which practices are consistent/appropriate - a "starter block" or root for all of our practices - all that we do should be interlaced or an outgrowth of our philosophy - guides our planning, implementation, and reflection about how we "do things" - it's the cornerstone of all that we do as we work with the learners within our environment, as we determine how best to reach the goals for each individual *(Participant D)*
		- the touchstone for decision making and the practices that help create a learning community and the community culture in which the learning process occurs - a piece of a belief system encompassing life, people, wisdom, experience, learning, knowledge, values, passions, dreams, vision - a belief system which is an individual's guide to living - an evolving belief that is "touched" by children, colleagues, research experience, exploration; it matures, blossoms, and then may change - how I articulate what I believe is important for children, for future - the threads of a tapestry before the colours, design, pattern, (and) shape take hold in day to day practices *(Participant E)*

		- the guiding set of principles of how and why you educate the way you do - the foundation from which you build your practices - any new techniques and practices we choose we can check against our philosophy to make sure they fit - without it you've got no unified direction; you have to check that your current and new practices are in line with your philosophy *(Participant F)*
		- one's beliefs about: <u>what</u> is important learning (and) <u>how</u> that learning is to be accomplished (child development, learning styles, teaching strengths, classroom atmosphere...are all important considerations here) - it is my <u>blueprint</u> for my teaching; it is why I do what I do - my philosophy is what guides my planning and teaching; all of my practices stem from my philosophical beliefs *(Participant J)*
		- a vision - a direction - a focus - how do children learn best? What do we know about child development? - what kind of environment/atmosphere do we want to create? Why do we want to create it? - if we don't have a direction, how do we know where we are going? *(Participant K)*

		- the way a person thinks about education and the learning process - how does someone learn? - how can a teacher best facilitate the learning process? - which learning style fits with which student? - what activities work best and why? - our philosophy changes to some extent with experience6 - knowledge affects my philosophy; there is always something new to learn - if a person does not believe in what he/she is doing, why do it at all? - my teaching (educational) philosophy is behind everything I do in the classroom; it is how I plan, how I teach, how I respond to students *(Participant L)*

> *better. Once we clearly see what we are seeking to achieve, then we can bend our energies toward accomplishing our goal...*
>
> *It is implicit in the rationale for teaching educational philosophy that the best job is more closely correlated to intelligent action than to ignorance. The educator is therefore under obligation to develop and act upon a well-considered philosophy of education.*
>
> *A well thought-out philosophy of education has value only if it is a means to an end rather than being an end in itself. That end should be more successful educational practice...educational philosophy, if its purpose is really understood, is the most practical of all subjects in the training of educators. Without educational philosophy there can be no meaningful practice. A first step in improving practice is, therefore, a sound attempt to improve our thinking about what we are doing and why we are doing it* (Knight, 126).

Although Knight clearly views educational philosophy as being highly significant to educational practice, he does point out that it is not the only consideration.

> *As important as educational philosophy is, however, every educator must realize that it is only one of several foundational elements that undergird the educational process. While philosophy provides the basic boundaries for the preferred educative practices for any group in society, other factors, including the political climate, economic conditions, the needs of the labor market, and the social conceptions of a specific population, certainly impact upon educational practice. Educational decisions are made in a dynamic milieu in which many factors contend for recognition. As a professional in education, you must make responsible, intelligent choices in relation to your particular social context* (p.131).

This view was also expressed by Participants *G* and *H* in their responses.

> *- outside factors must be considered (Participant G).*
>
> *- it guides most of the things you do at school; it can't effect everything because of other outside factors (administration, setting, school board policy, etc.) (Participant H).*

Although the remaining nine participants did not specifically make reference to social, political, or economic factors in their survey responses, there was recognition given to these factors during discussions with individual participants. Each expressed perspectives on where Bisset fit within the broader society. However, it was Sue who

spoke at some length about this issue.

> *"It's interesting that the philosophy statement that we have right now doesn't necessarily talk about education. But what it does talk about is that these are the kinds of children that we want to become the kinds of adults who we will want to be having as part of our society. And, as we continue to grow, which is part of the evolution you were talking about, we have to come to believe that if education isn't grounded in what we want for society, then its context is irrelevant. And so, I think that that thinking is beginning to be reflected in our philosophy statement and certainly in some of the practices that perhaps we're struggling with.*
>
> *"Education, historically, has reacted to the pressures of society so that, if there is a problem in society, education is expected to react to that in order to prepare children differently. What I am saying is that I think the time has come for education to become a leader, to say, 'This is the society we want to create; not the society that we want to react to, or try to fix once the problems have emerged.' We have to flip it around, because when I think about it, I think that we have the captive audience. We have the children, we have the next generation of leaders. And if we're not giving them the grounding that we think that not only are they going to need in society, but <u>we</u> are going to need, then we're always playing catch-up. And if you're playing catch-up, you're never extending your potential or examining the possibilities that might be.*
>
> *"What do we want twenty-five years from now? What skills, attitudes, and knowledge do we want our children to have? What kind of society do we want them to create? What kind of society do we want to live in? Our children are the ones who are going to create that, and that should be our relationship to the bigger picture. We (as educators) should be leaders.*
>
> *"For example, if what we want our children to be able to do is to deal with information, we need to begin by recognizing that the management of information is going to be phenomenal in the next ten years. And, there is no way that we are going to be able to control what children have access to. So what we have to do is get children to think, to control the access themselves by whatever value framework we give them. That way, when they see something they can respond: 'That's not relevant; Whoa, I don't understand that, or ; (instinctively or consciously) That is wrong for me to be watching, or seeing, or reading.'*
>
> *"I would like to put education in a completely different quadrant. I think it should be leading society. And part of that leading is having an understanding of the past, so we're not losing that. We're not losing the*

traditions, the fabric of the tapestry, but you are adding different colours to it, many different shapes, and different prints to the design.

"So, with that mindset, competing in the world politically the way we are right now, it's no wonder that I feel that we are going against the current. It's not the trend right now to hold that view, but it certainly is a very strong belief of mine and the staff are trying to work with that belief (E/95/05/10)."

Educational Philosophy Connected to Life Philosophy

Clearly, the value that is attributed to educational philosophy at Bisset has not occurred through happenstance. Rather, it has been a gradual process that originated with Sue's views on the significance of educational philosophy. As the primary founding member of the school, Sue engaged the original staff in extensive discussions about their broader life philosophies before beginning the task of delineating a Bisset educational philosophy. She described the connection between life and educational philosophies as she recognizes it.

"The principal's educational beliefs and knowledge of strategies and programming are certainly important. Originally, when we opened, I had a set of beliefs. Many of our past and current practices, the demonstrations of our philosophy, stem from educational beliefs that I have. I hired people who could either implement, or who I thought could learn to implement, some of the educational practices that I believe are important to kids.

"The first thing that we did as a staff was to set the philosophy of the school, what we were trying to do. This is where vision and philosophy become intertwined; sometimes it is hard to differentiate between the two. But there is a difference.

"We talked about the beliefs that we held as a group of people that didn't know one another very well. And, this discussion went beyond our beliefs about education to our beliefs about life, because it is your personal beliefs about people and about life that affect your educational beliefs. Therefore, they have to be congruent. You can't have a belief about life that is contrary to your belief about education. So we did a lot of work surrounding the questions, 'What do you believe? What's important in your life?', as opposed to simply asking, 'What's important at school?'. We also discussed sense of self and what's important for kids.

> *"From there we began to brainstorm and talk about how we could consistently demonstrate the focus of the school, to reflect that emphasis in everything we would do. We started off by picking those strategies that were best for demonstrating that. Every year since then we have identified a new strategy for development and inclusion in our repertoire; but always coming back to the collective philosophy statement to say, 'This is what we believe.' If ever we get to a point where we're no longer believing that it's true, then we'd better change the operating statement of the school because everything fits into that statement.*
>
> *"You need to be true to yourself. It is your personal beliefs about people and about life that affect your educational beliefs. They have to be congruent. Yes, education is important, but it's only part of what we do. The rest of the time is our life. Consequently, part of the other roles we take on as either wife, or father, or mother, or husband, or church leader, or softball coach, or whatever it is we're doing, all have to be congruent. The educational piece is just one segment of an entire personal philosophy* (E/95/05/10)."

These statements allude to a series of assumptions that appear to have been held throughout Bisset's history:

1. That teachers are human beings with philosophies of life (that encompass their beliefs about what is real, good, and true);
2. That educational philosophy is a branch of one's life philosophy;
3. That educational philosophy is important to practice because human actions are ultimately guided by beliefs;
4. That being aware of one's life philosophy and educational philosophy is critical to comprehending the definition of self as a person and as a teacher, and to one's effectiveness as an educator;
5. That true commitment to any aspect of practice and passion for teaching must stem from beliefs grounded in one's educational philosophy, and;
6. That common philosophical orientations, when articulated and utilized, can and should provide a powerful bond, a sense of group identity, and a guiding direction for staff.

Interconnectedness Within Individual Educational Philosophies

Although the focus of this research was the role of educational philosophy in relation to the selection of curriculum resource materials, discussion of the criteria and processes used for this selection also yielded insights into individual participants' beliefs about: purpose of schooling, organization of the school, teaching and the role of the teacher, assessment, curriculum, learning and the role of the learner, and the role of parents. Whitehead (1957) wrote of the notion of such epistemological integration.

> *Interrelated truths are utilized en bloc, and the various propositions are employed in any order, and with any reiteration* (p.4).

During the final interview with each of the four individuals (Mary, Kathy, Sally, and Marvin), a partial web of various aspects of their individual educational philosophies (as inferred by the researcher) were presented for verification. Participants were also invited to make additions. The final versions of these webs appear on the following pages as Figures 4 through 7.

In comparing these webs, it was evident that there were several points that were common to all four. Moreover, although there were different areas of emphasis within each web, there were **no contradictory statements.** That is, none of the four individuals expressed philosophic orientations that were in opposition to those of their colleagues. When asked to comment on these likenesses, none of the participants communicated surprise at the degree of similarity. Rather, they had anticipated this finding.

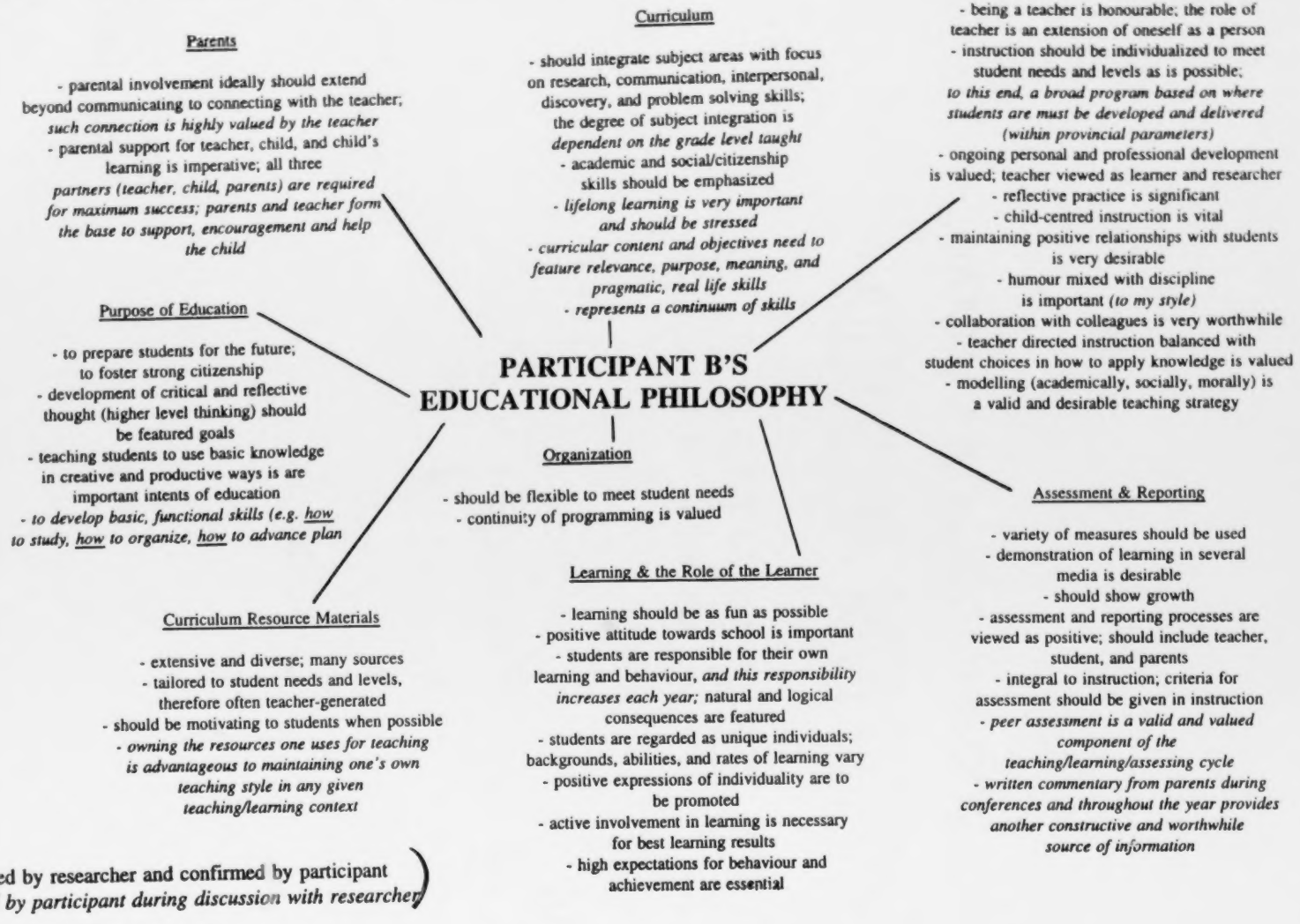
> *"There is an amazing degree of agreement here on the main issues. There is no dissention on the answers to, 'What are we here for? What are we trying to do?' But that hasn't been imposed from our administration. The expression of our commonality has come with some guidance - and the way that Sue does that is marvellous - but it hasn't been imposed.*

> *"In one of the first meetings that we had when the school opened, Sue had us think about, 'What do we know about teaching kids that works?' From there we split up and wrote down on chart paper what we felt was valid, what we knew worked about teaching kids. When we came back together, there was an amazing level of agreement on a lot of the points.*

FIGURE 4: PARTICIPANT A's EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

PARTICIPANT A'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY
Learning & the Role of the Learner
- learning is a lifelong process
- teaching and learning are inseparable concepts
- learning through the arts is significant; provides a wide variety of ways for students to express learning and knowing
- children are individuals and should be treated as such
- experiencing success is critical to children's development; they must have confidence and believe in themselves as learners
- children are responsible for their own behaviour and learning; goal setting by students is a significant example of this
- the teaching/learning process should be child-centred and reflect a whole child orientation
- active involvement and experiential learning are important to helping create meaning
- student interests, backgrounds, and levels must be considered in the teaching/learning cycle; expectations for learning should be variable and consistent with student needs and strengths
- mistakes are opportunities for learning
Purpose of Education
- preparing students for their futures
- fostering strong citizenship
- development of creative, critical, logical, reflective thinking and problem-solving skills
- encouraging a positive sense of caring, sharing, respect
Organization
- multi-aged grouping is highly beneficial; facilitates academic and social growth, peer teaching, and modelling by other students
- flexibility of organization is necessary to accommodate student differences and needs
- continuity of programming (e.g. same teacher for two consecutive years) is important
Assessment & Reporting
- growth is continuous, therefore assessment must also be a continuous process
- assessing at different times using a variety of media and ways of measuring growth is required for more accurate and meaningful appraisal
- the assessment and reporting process must be collaborative (students, teachers, parents)
- assessment should be a celebration of who students are and what they can do; focus needs to be on what can be done
- reflecting and goal setting are integral components of growth
Curriculum
- should represent the learning continuum
- continuity of programming is important
- should not be limiting; a reflection of life; a starting point for teaching and learning versus being the whole program
Curriculum Resource Materials
- should be tailored to kids' needs and to match the teaching/learning objectives
- variety is important, and several sources should be considered
- literature should be the primary resource in a literature-based program
- materials must be developmentally appropriate as well as level appropriate (for student needs and strengths); multi-level materials are desirable for this reason
Parents
- must be viewed as an essential part of the team working in partnership with the teacher and school
- it is crucial that parents take an active role in their child's learning
- parents bring many gifts, talents, and much knowledge to share within the school; choices for levels of involvement are plentiful and varied
Teaching & the Role of the Teacher
- a key aspect of teaching is to create spaces and opportunities for creativity and artistic expression
- being a teacher is part of one's person; professional and personal aspects of life often cross
- acting as a facilitator is a substantial role in teaching
- educating parents is important
- providing opportunities for student success is a crucial aspect of teaching
- protecting students from harmful situations and providing assistance is critical; however, students should not be protected from mistakes that are learning opportunities
Inferred by researcher and confirmed by participant
Noted by participant during discussion with researcher

FIGURE 5: PARTICIPANT B's EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY


PARTICIPANT B'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY
Parents
- parental involvement ideally should extend beyond communicating to connecting with the teacher; *such connection is highly valued by the teacher*
- parental support for teacher, child, and child's learning is imperative; all three *partners (teacher, child, parents) are required for maximum success; parents and teacher form the base to support, encouragement and help the child*
Curriculum
- should integrate subject areas with focus on research, communication, interpersonal, discovery, and problem solving skills; the degree of subject integration is *dependent on the grade level taught*
- academic and social/citizenship skills should be emphasized
- *lifelong learning is very important and should be stressed*
- *curricular content and objectives need to feature relevance, purpose, meaning, and pragmatic, real life skills*
- *represents a continuum of skills*
Teaching & the Role of the Teacher
- being a teacher is honourable; the role of teacher is an extension of oneself as a person
- instruction should be individualized to meet student needs and levels as is possible; *to this end, a broad program based on where students are must be developed and delivered (within provincial parameters)*
- ongoing personal and professional development is valued; teacher viewed as learner and researcher
- reflective practice is significant
- child-centred instruction is vital
- maintaining positive relationships with students is very desirable
- humour mixed with discipline is important *(to my style)*
- collaboration with colleagues is very worthwhile
- teacher directed instruction balanced with student choices in how to apply knowledge is valued
- modelling (academically, socially, morally) is a valid and desirable teaching strategy
Purpose of Education
- to prepare students for the future; to foster strong citizenship
- development of critical and reflective thought (higher level thinking) should be featured goals
- teaching students to use basic knowledge in creative and productive ways is are important intents of education
- *to develop basic, functional skills (e.g. how to study, how to organize, how to advance plan*
Organization
- should be flexible to meet student needs
- continuity of programming is valued
Assessment & Reporting
- variety of measures should be used
- demonstration of learning in several media is desirable
- should show growth
- assessment and reporting processes are viewed as positive; should include teacher, student, and parents
- integral to instruction; criteria for assessment should be given in instruction
- *peer assessment is a valid and valued component of the teaching/learning/assessing cycle*
- *written commentary from parents during conferences and throughout the year provides another constructive and worthwhile source of information*
Curriculum Resource Materials
- extensive and diverse; many sources
- tailored to student needs and levels, therefore often teacher-generated
- should be motivating to students when possible
- *owning the resources one uses for teaching is advantageous to maintaining one's own teaching style in any given teaching/learning context*
Learning & the Role of the Learner
- learning should be as fun as possible
- positive attitude towards school is important
- students are responsible for their own learning and behaviour, *and this responsibility increases each year;* natural and logical consequences are featured
- students are regarded as unique individuals; backgrounds, abilities, and rates of learning vary
- positive expressions of individuality are to be promoted
- active involvement in learning is necessary for best learning results
- high expectations for behaviour and achievement are essential

(Inferred by researcher and confirmed by participant
Noted by participant during discussion with researcher)

FIGURE 6: PARTICIPANT C's EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

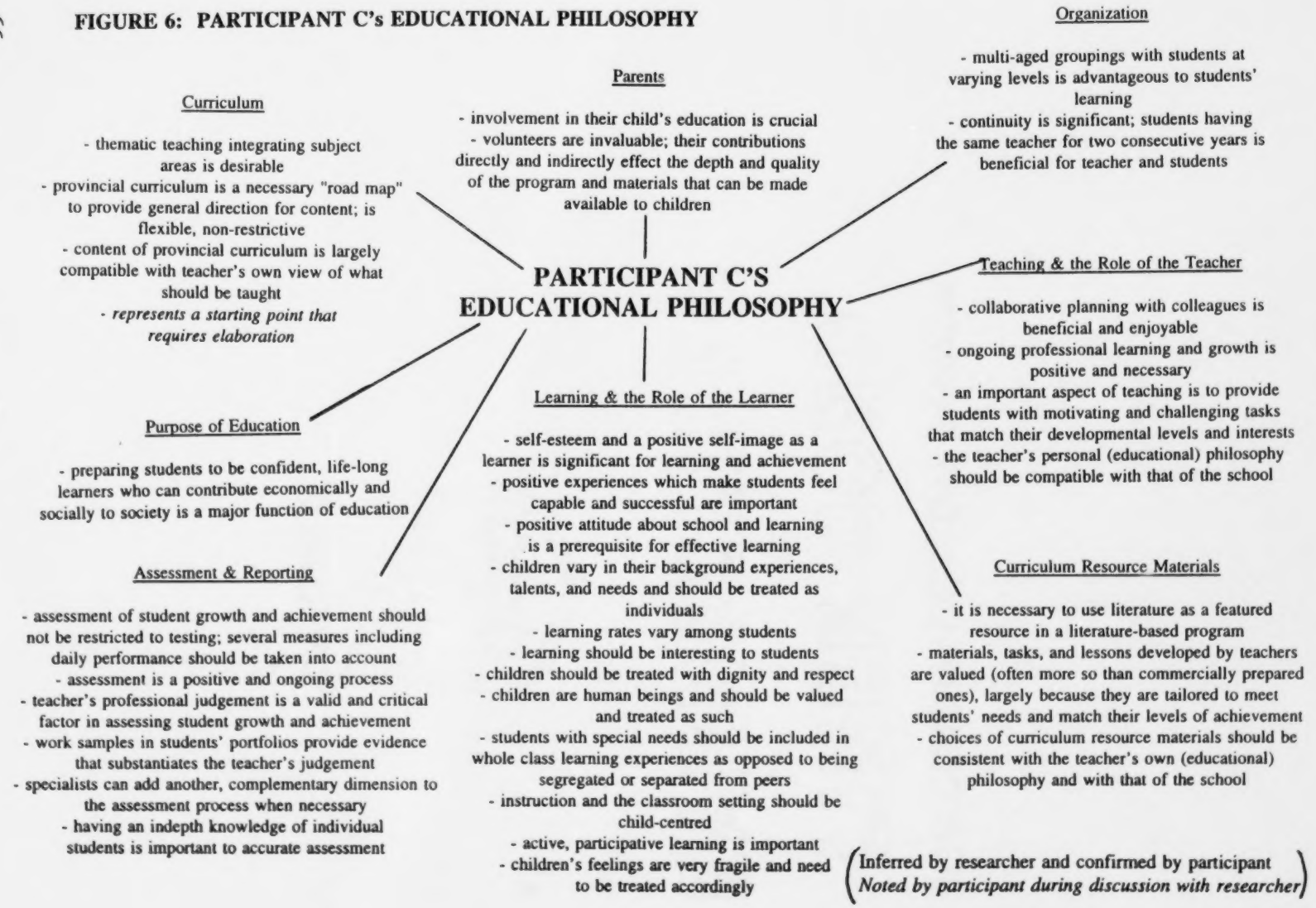

PARTICIPANT C'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY
Curriculum
- thematic teaching integrating subject areas is desirable
- provincial curriculum is a necessary "road map" to provide general direction for content; is flexible, non-restrictive
- content of provincial curriculum is largely compatible with teacher's own view of what should be taught
- represents a starting point that requires elaboration
Parents
- involvement in their child's education is crucial
- volunteers are invaluable; their contributions directly and indirectly effect the depth and quality of the program and materials that can be made available to children
Organization
- multi-aged groupings with students at varying levels is advantageous to students' learning
- continuity is significant; students having the same teacher for two consecutive years is beneficial for teacher and students
Teaching & the Role of the Teacher
- collaborative planning with colleagues is beneficial and enjoyable
- ongoing professional learning and growth is positive and necessary
- an important aspect of teaching is to provide students with motivating and challenging tasks that match their developmental levels and interests
- the teacher's personal (educational) philosophy should be compatible with that of the school
Purpose of Education
- preparing students to be confident, life-long learners who can contribute economically and socially to society is a major function of education
Assessment & Reporting
- assessment of student growth and achievement should not be restricted to testing; several measures including daily performance should be taken into account
- assessment is a positive and ongoing process
- teacher's professional judgement is a valid and critical factor in assessing student growth and achievement
- work samples in students' portfolios provide evidence that substantiates the teacher's judgement
- specialists can add another, complementary dimension to the assessment process when necessary
- having an indepth knowledge of individual students is important to accurate assessment
Learning & the Role of the Learner
- self-esteem and a positive self-image as a learner is significant for learning and achievement
- positive experiences which make students feel capable and successful are important
- positive attitude about school and learning is a prerequisite for effective learning
- children vary in their background experiences, talents, and needs and should be treated as individuals
- learning rates vary among students
- learning should be interesting to students
- children should be treated with dignity and respect
- children are human beings and should be valued and treated as such
- students with special needs should be included in whole class learning experiences as opposed to being segregated or separated from peers
- instruction and the classroom setting should be child-centred
- active, participative learning is important
- children's feelings are very fragile and need to be treated accordingly
Curriculum Resource Materials
- it is necessary to use literature as a featured resource in a literature-based program
- materials, tasks, and lessons developed by teachers are valued (often more so than commercially prepared ones), largely because they are tailored to meet students' needs and match their levels of achievement
- choices of curriculum resource materials should be consistent with the teacher's own (educational) philosophy and with that of the school
(Inferred by researcher and confirmed by participant
Noted by participant during discussion with researcher)

FIGURE 7: PARTICIPANT F's EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

PARTICIPANT F'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY
Teaching & the Role of the Teacher
- to create purpose and meaning for learning; to provide a real life orientation
- valuing students as human beings and treating them with respect is critical
- the human factor in teaching must be considered in all decisions and actions
- connecting with students on a personal level is pivotal to effective teaching
- making opportunities for creative, open ended problem solving (with an emphasis on real life applications) as well as providing questions with "one right answer" is important
Curriculum Resource Materials
- materials (e.g. textbooks) should not dictate the program
- resources should generally be used as foundational tools/springboards as opposed to being used prescriptively
- materials should be tailored to student and programming needs
- resources ideally should be multi-levelled to respond to student differences
- need to be varied and coming from several sources
Parents
- represent critical partners in the school community; very important sources of information and learning
- very informed part of the teaching/learning team; parents must know what the school is doing and support the school
- home and other experiences outside of school influence learning; knowledge of these experiences help in understanding students better; home visits are valuable to this end
- parents are essential to all school activities, from homework to extracurricular ventures
Assessment & Reporting
- learning to critique one's own work and that of others assists greatly in learning and in the development of students' own standards for performance
- portfolios should reflect what students can do in a variety of contexts with a variety of measures
- emphasis needs to be placed on performance based assessment; students need to know what they know
- must include more than a letter grade or percentage; must give specific, detailed information about what was learned and how well it was learned, about where students are in the graded curriculum; qualifying commentary or explanation during a conference is crucial to understanding progress
Learning & the Role of the Learner
- allowing student choice of topics (sometimes within parameters) can greatly enhance student interest and motivation; capturing student interest is vital to creating meaning and relevance
- students possess much valuable knowledge
- students must take responsibility for their own behaviour and learning; natural and logical consequences are featured
- students must be provided with opportunities for self-direction
- active involvement is necessary for learning
- students vary in their levels of physical, emotional, and academic strengths and needs; programming must consider individual differences
- peer coaching is a very effective strategy
- challenging students to grow in character as well as academics is important
Organization
- having students for two consecutive years is highly beneficial to teacher and students; flexibility within that two year system is key
- retaining/failing students is almost invariably detrimental; lock-step graded structure ignores "spurts" in learning that continuity of programming allows for
Curriculum
- an integrated approach to teaching content is desirable (research, communication, interpersonal, discovery, problem solving); such amalgamation of content assists with transference, reinforcement of concepts, promotes real life relevance and meaning
- curriculum is viewed as a continuum of skills
- focus should be placed on depth versus simply on broad coverage of content
Purpose of Education
- preparation for life; emphasis on getting along with oneself, others, and the environment in addition to developing basic, functional life skills/tools
(Inferred by researcher and confirmed by participant
Noted by participant during discussion with researcher)

> *"Sue is smart. She picked people who she knew would philosophically follow her. So that level of commonality is not really surprising at all* (F/95/05/10)."

Combining the four individual webs with additional statements of beliefs found within the staff handbook, a large board displaying a composite web was presented to the Bisset staff in its entirety. During a subsequent staff meeting, each staff member was asked whether or not they agreed with the statements, and whether or not they would like to make supplementary statements for inclusion in a final chart. A written statement compiled by Sue, the principal, was provided to the researcher. It indicated that the staff were in agreement with the data on the chart, and that they did not wish to make any additional points at that time.

The final composite web, entitled *A Constellation of Beliefs at Bisset School*, was left with the staff at their request for display in their staffroom.

The Bisset Belief System

In consulting the research literature, the work of Rokeach (1960) is useful in coming to a greater understanding of the Bisset belief system as portrayed in the *Constellation of Beliefs at Bisset School* as described above. Rokeach asserts that, for individuals, a dual system of beliefs (that which the person perceives to be true) and disbeliefs (that which the person perceives to be untrue) will always be operating. This dichotomous relationship forms the epistemological foundation for the person.

Conway (1989), utilizing Rokeach's theoretical framework, described what he referred to as the *belief-disbelief dimension* for groups of people.

> *It is suggested that in organizations, as in individuals or living organisms, there are two systems operating, one of beliefs and another of disbeliefs. These systems are parallel but not symmetrical. For every belief held in an organization, as in the wisdom of consensus decision making, there are a series of beliefs about ways for arriving at decisions that are considered inappropriate or even false for that organization. Thus the disbelief subsystem on decision making might contain hundreds of entries for a single belief in the parallel belief system. According to Rokeach:*

> *a) the **belief system** represented all the beliefs, sets, expectancies, or hypotheses, stated or implicit, that a group or organization at a given time accepts as true of the environment in which it exists; and*
>
> *b) the **disbelief system** is composed of a series of subsystems rather than merely a single system, and contains all the disbeliefs, sets, expectancies, stated or implied, that, to one degree or another, a group or subgroup at a given time rejects as false.*
>
> *The combined systems of beliefs and disbeliefs as these occur in the organization shall be referred to as the "organizational belief structure". Besides its parallel and asymmetrical arrangement, each dimension also has several additional properties that contribute to an understanding of the structural aspect of the organization's culture* (p.148).
>
> *Using Rokeach's conceptualization for individual cognitive systems as a model, it has been argued that organizations also possess a collective belief-disbelief system designated as the organizational belief structure* (p.153).

Effectively, the *Constellation of Beliefs* chart summarized the key beliefs held by within the Bisset organization. Although the disbelief piece of the belief-disbelief dimension was not also transcribed for display, there were several instances during the individual interviews when the researcher inferred a belief based on participants' provision of examples of disbeliefs.

Examples of Interconnectedness from the Staff Handbook

As noted in the previous section, *Interconnectedness Within Individual Educational Philosophies*, additional statements of beliefs (regarding purpose of schooling, organization of the school, assessment, curriculum, learning and the role of the learner, the role of parents, and curriculum resource materials) were delineated in the Bisset staff handbook (subtitled *Our Collective Wisdom*). Information on each of these areas followed the school's philosophy statement. This section constituted the majority of the handbook, and included not only policy statements, examples of staff work and ideas, and general information, but also contained several professional articles. During one discussion with the principal, the researcher learned that the opening staff meeting after the summer break

included a review of Eisner's article *What Really Counts in Schools* (the purpose of schooling). A discussion page centering on the topics of *education, values of the educational enterprise,* and *roadblocks* came after the article in the handbook. This follow up page set the direction for discussion amongst the staff.

A summary of some of the most illustrative philosophically oriented statements found in the staff handbook follows. Although each subheading corresponds to the specific section where the quotes were drawn from, the citations themselves rarely speak to only one aspect of Bisset's belief system. This in itself reinforces the staff's perspective of the interconnected nature of educational philosophy.

Additional Philosophical Points Specific to Purpose of Education. Beliefs about the purpose of education reflect an optimistic orientation towards the future.

> *Much has been written recently about the education system and the role of schooling in our society. Even with declining resources, at Bisset we are optimistic and excited about this opportunity for creating an educational model that is forward-looking. We want to prepare students to work independently and together so that they have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will lead them to a productive, happy, caring future in school and beyond...*
>
> *Bisset School, because of our current programs, accomplishments, and organization is ideally situated to take on the challenge presented to us moving education into the 21st century.*

Additional Philosophical Points Specific to Organization. The connection between the Bisset educational philosophy and practice, and between organization and other aspects of teaching and learning are addressed in the following quote.

> *We have chosen an organization which reflects our new philosophy statement and is consistent with the way in which we know children learn, develop, and grow. This will be the first year of a research study to see if by re-thinking curriculum, teaching and learning relationships, assessment of these relationships we can develop an alternate model for offering an education to all of the people within our school community...*
>
> *Cooperative learning, peer teaching, and coaching are strategies which enhance flexible grouping. Classrooms are interactive, child centred places where each individual's rate and learning path are accommodated.*

> *We take each child from where he/she is academically and socially as far as they can go. The students stay with the same teachers for two years to facilitate continuity in programming and instruction.*
>
> *The challenge for us is to use all of the collective resources and experience (graded curriculum is one) available to adapt and design programs where children experience success and growth in their learning...*
>
> *We need to be accountable to our children (those we have power over) to honour what has been given us; to use power with a sense of grace and believe our children are capable and responsible for being involved as partners in their own pursuit for meaning, purpose, and structure.*

Additional Philosophical Points Specific to Assessment and Reporting. The next points regarding assessment and the reporting of student progress also address the elements of teaching and learning and stress the relationship between the three.

> *The process of portfolio"ing" is a very active, ongoing, and ever changing one. It can be alive and filled with magic if the portfolio itself is not viewed as an end product standing alone. The portfolio must be supported by a greater philosophical framework which includes beliefs about teaching, learning, and assessing. The development of portfolios must come from teacher discussions centering around the question, "How do we communicate in a way that is congruent with our beliefs about teaching and learning, as well as congruent with the collaborative and reflective teaching practices with the school?"*

Beliefs about the role of students and parents in the assessment, reporting, and portfolio processes are also described in this section of the handbook.

> *Students themselves play a large part in this* (assessment) *process. In fact, they are the driving force as they make choices, meet high expectations, and take responsibility for their own learning. In other words, students need to become involved -- THINKING LEARNING CREATING -- in an atmosphere that provides T.L.C. so children can take risks.*
>
> *Parents have an extremely important role to play as well. Assessing, teaching, and learning happen as parents, teachers and students set goals and plans as well as discussing, as a team, the path from home to Bisset to Junior High. Learning happens all the time so collaboration (parents, staff, students working together) must be ongoing and continuous.*

Additional Philosophical Points Specific to Curriculum. The interrelatedness of content areas within the curriculum is considered in the handbook. As well, the aspect of curriculum is coupled with the purpose of education.

> *At Bisset we believe that all subject matter is inter-related. The most evident example of this fact can be illustrated if we think about reading. Effective reading is valuable to the student in any of the subject areas -- science, math, social studies, as well as in, but not solely language arts. Recognizing the inter-relatedness of curriculum has allowed us to combine objectives and categorize those objectives no matter what their subject area in the following four skill areas: Communication, Research, Interpersonal, Discovery.*
>
> *...We want to prepare students to work independently and together so that they have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will lead them to a productive, happy, caring future in school and beyond.*

Additional Philosophical Points Specific to Learning and the Role of the Learner. Although the primary focus of the following quote describes expectations for student behaviour, learning, and positive learning environments, it is significant that it also alludes to the vision of future citizens that are depicted within previous citations regarding the purpose of education.

> *At Bisset we strive to work together with our students so that they are actively involved in:*
> *- making choices*
> *- accepting consequences*
> *- coping with problems*
> *- caring about themselves, others, and our school*
> *- contributing to their own learning*
> *- creating an atmosphere which is safe, warm, friendly, and secure*
> *- being courteous to others*
> *- using common sense in situations*
> *- becoming citizens of our community.*
>
> *At Bisset School we believe that:*
> *- it is the right of all children to experience success.*
> *- each child is unique and that individual student needs and interests will be met.*
> *- children learn best in a safe, secure, child-centred environment.*

Therefore, in our school, programs will be provided to develop academic achievement and positive self-esteem. We encourage our children to take responsibility for their own learning. Everyone is a teacher and everyone is a learner....

Our discipline policy reflects the belief that students can and will make good decisions if they are allowed the opportunity to decide given the positive support they need, and held accountable for the decisions they make. Our discipline procedures, of which this policy is a part, are all directed toward placing responsibility for a student's behaviour where it belongs -- totally in his own hands.

Additional Philosophical Points Specific to the Role of Parents. The integral role of parents within the teaching/learning vision of Bisset is portrayed in the handbook.

1. *We must go to the families, not wait for them to come to the school.*
2. *We must make our schools family-friendly.*
3. *We must be sensitive to families' needs and to their cultural differences.*
4. *We must convince our school districts to make family involvement in education a priority and to adopt appropriate policies.*
5. *We must forge partnerships with our communities, including providers of social services and child care.*
6. *We must provide information and guidance to help parents be good parents.*
7. *We must tell families what we're doing in school and why.*
8. *We must help our teachers develop strong home-school relationships.*
9. *We must make family involvement a critical part of teacher training.*

Additional Philosophical Points Specific to Curriculum Resource Materials. The school's *Language Learning Policy* directly corresponds to the emphasis on literature and

its use in the school. In addition to highlighting beliefs about the appropriateness of literature as curriculum resource materials, tenets about curriculum, the role of the learner, and teaching are also found in this policy.

> *At Bisset School we believe that the more children read, the better readers they'll become; and the more they write, the better writers they will become. Since each child is unique, a literature-based program provides an ideal way to meet individual needs and interests.*
>
> *Children learn best in a safe, secure environment where they feel free to be creative, ask questions, share their experiences, thereby taking responsibility for their own learning.*
>
> *It is the right of all children to experience success. Through our literature based program, children will maximize their individual potentials, which promotes positive self-esteem and academic achievement.*
>
> *In a literature based program, students are actively involved in using literature. This interactive process consists of:*
>
> 1. *exposure to a wide variety of literature (novel studies, silent reading, shared reading, home reading, creating stories, etc.)*
> 2. *responding to literature in a variety of ways (daily writing, class books, drama, role playing, discussion, thinking skills, etc.)*
> 3. *incorporating literature into other curricular areas to provide background, experiences, extensions of content.*
>
> *The above are the vehicles used to teach the important mechanics of reading and writing - spelling, grammar, phonics, work attack skills, comprehension, printing, cursive writing, etc.*
>
> *We are really excited about sharing ideas and working together to create a child-centred teaching-learning environment.*

What has been portrayed through these many statements reveals much about what the Bisset staff consider to be real, good, and true about teaching and learning. Although the statements are presented as separate pieces, there is an overall coherence and consistency that binds them together. Essentially, they flow from the central statement of educational philosophy found in the preface of this dissertation.

Chapter Reflections

The richness and depth of meaning ascribed to the concept of educational philosophy at Bisset School is evident throughout the data presented in this chapter. That it is viewed as stemming from a broader life philosophy and encompassing many different aspects speaks to the complexity of educational philosophy within this research context. That it is seen as having high pragmatic value is also apparent.

It would be unrealistic (as well as untrue) to assume that this is the case within every educational institution. How, then, did it come to be at this particular location? What forces have shaped this current state? The following two chapters seek to provide some insight into these questions.

Chapter 7

FINDINGS: GROUP AND PHILOSOPHICAL MATURATION

Since it is the primary function of the intellectual to knit the disparate and disarrayed tag ends of things into clear and consistent meaningful wholes in every area of learning, nothing could be more natural than for each to envision the whole as finally organized, integrated and explained in terms of the generalized insights of his own distinctive philosophy, religion or academic discipline. Not only is this natural, to a certain degree it is inevitable, and there is a sense in which is proper. It is proper as forever unfinished aspiration
(Kircher, 1974: p.24).

Introduction to the Chapter

Educational philosophy, as viewed by the Bisset staff, is not a static, completed entity. Rather, it is seen as an evolving cluster of interrelated, carefully examined beliefs that are entwined with the group's identity. As the group has matured, so too has their understanding of the meaning and implications of educational philosophy.

Several factors were identified by participants as having encouraged and discouraged individuals' (educational) philosophic evolution through several stages of development.

Group Maturation

Schein (1985) identifies four stages of evolution of a group of people: *1) group formation, 2) group building, 3) group work,* and *4) group maturity.* An overview of the characteristics of each of these stages is found on the table following (Table 3). It should be noted at this point that not all groups will necessarily proceed through all four stages. The majority of groups will not go beyond the second stage (Schein, 1985).

Schein asserts that recognition of these stages is important when leadership seeks to mould the direction and strength of the culture of the group, beginning very early in the life of the group.

...in any new group situation...much of the initial behaviour of founders,

TABLE 3
SCHEIN'S STAGES OF GROUP EVOLUTION

STAGE	DOMINANT ASSUMPTION	SOCIOEMOTIONAL FOCUS
1. Group Formation	Dependence: "The leader knows what we should do."	Self-Orientation Emotional focus on issues of (1) inclusion, (2) power and influence, (3) acceptance and intimacy, (4) identity and role.
2. Group Building	Fusion: "We are a great group; we all like each other."	Group as Idealized Object Emotional focus on harmony, conformity, and search for intimacy. Member differences are not valued.
3. Group Work	Work: "We can perform effectively because we know and accept each other."	Group Mission and Tasks Emotional focus on accomplishment, teamwork, and maintaining the group in good working order. Member differences are valued.
4. Group Maturity	Maturity: "We know who we are, what we want, and how to get it. We have been successful, so we must be right."	Group Survival and Comfort Emotional focus on preserving the group and its culture. Creativity and member differences are seen as threat.

Source: Schein, E. *Organizational Culture and Leadership,* p.191.

> *leaders, and other initiators is individually motivated and reflects their particular assumptions and intentions. But, as the individuals in the group begin to do things together and share experiences around such individually motivated acts, groupness arises...*
>
> *For the group to begin to understand its sense of groupness, someone must articulate what the experience has been and what it means...Such articulation is, in fact, one of the most crucial components of what we call leadership and can be understood as an act of culture creation if the process imparts meaning to an important shared emotional experience. Some of the deepest and most potent shared experiences occur within the first few hours of group life, so the deepest levels of consensus on who we are, what our mission is, and how we will work are formed very early in the group's history* (p. 190).

Returning to Sue's description of how the Bisset educational philosophy was developed (chapter 6, *Educational Philosophy Connected to Life Philosophy*), we can begin to understand more fully how a sense of groupness grounded in philosophy was nurtured from the very beginning of the school's life. Sue has effectively described an example of Schein's theory of group development and culture creation.

Bisset's Level of Group Evolution. In relation to Schein's stages of group development, the collective staff at Bisset can be described as most closely resembling the third stage, *group work*. Having identified and cultivated a series of interconnected beliefs and correlating norms (a task requiring substantial time and effort), the staff are now in period of creative achievement. That is, the staff are involved in a number of initiatives that are unique to the school. Norms are strong, but allow for some latitude in individual differences.

> *As the group evolves and the need for perfect harmony diminishes, members recognize differences as "real" and potentially valuable. At this stage the group exerts less pressure to conform and builds norms that encourage some measure of individuality and personal growth, on the assumption that the group ultimately will benefit if all members grow and become stronger* (Schein, 1985: p.204).

The "individuality" referred to in the above citation was evident in the previous chapter (*Interconnectedness Within Individual Educational Philosophies*) in the four individual

philosophical webs that contained some variations in emphases but held no contradictory beliefs.

(Educational) Philosophical Maturation

In addition to the development of the group as a whole, there has been a second, two tiered process of (educational) philosophic maturation at the individual and group levels.

Growth as Individuals. As the Bisset staff have evolved as a group, so too have they individually experienced professional development in a variety of areas; including that of increased awareness and clarification of their own personal educational philosophies.

> *"Being here helps you grow and really firm up your beliefs and philosophy. I don't think any of us ever changed our core beliefs when we came here; we just went further, grew a little bit more* (C/95/05/15)."

> *"I think it's wonderful if you can try something new and really believe in it. But I also think it's wonderful if you can say, 'Well, that didn't work out.' Knowing that we're allowed to experiment and go off on tangents and try new things without somebody monitoring every step of the way allows you to try, and try more* (C/95/05/18)."

Growth as a Group. A highly significant factor in the maturation of the group has been the focus on the collective Bisset educational philosophy. The group cohesion that exists began with and has intentionally been developed around the common beliefs of the staff. As a focal point for decision making and action, the essence of the initial statement has been maintained but the implications and meanings associated with the statement have expanded over time. This has resulted not only in group maturation but also in growth in the collective educational philosophy. Pat expanded on this point.

> *"I think we have really grown* (philosophically) *in the past six years. I think that the core of the philosophy is still there and is still completely intact. But I think it has grown; by bounds at times as we mature. With the kind of school, staff, and leader that we have, it's really highly evident that learning, like the old cliche, is a life long process. It has been true for us. The excitement in learning and the enthusiasm for learning are not only evident in the programs that we provide for students, but in the*

> *learning that we do ourselves. And because learning is a process for us, that's what has made us take that core and expand it to the degree that we have.*
>
> *"In terms of philosophical growth, I think that talk is absolutely essential for clarification of what we're thinking, what we're believing, and what we're doing. Of course, the same is true for* (professional) *reading. And I think that putting the philosophy into practice is important; testing things out, trying things, having the opportunity and the room to take risks and to take a chance that something's not going to work. Sometimes things have worked wonderfully, and sometimes when you reflect back....*(laughter) (D/95/05/08)."

Mary also spoke of the process of philosophical growth in their time at Bisset.

> *"A philosophy comes from several places: from the knowledge base that we have, from our experiences, and from the literature. The difficult part is bringing all of those ideas together from a group of people who each have their own personal philosophy of education and then trying to narrow it down to say the important points within a statement that you can then use as your foundation for decisions and actions. A leader has to be talented to do that.*
>
> *"Sue works with the staff, bringing their ideas together. As a whole, they then form a basis, a philosophical statement that they work from, and everything is centred around that. Even though we might have slightly different teaching styles and different talents and strengths on this staff, Sue knows how to bring us together as a team and work from a core, basic philosophy* (A/95/04/25)."

The assertion that educational philosophy is something that evolves over time was frequently evident in the data gathered from the site and supported in the research literature.

> *...it is important to realize that philosophy building is an ongoing process. As an educator, you will continually gain new insights, and as your breadth of knowledge and practical experience expands, you will be constantly developing your philosophy. Educational professionals should think of educational philosophy as something they "do" on a perpetual basis, rather than as something they once studied in a course with those words in the title...The building of a personal philosophy for both life and education is a continuing process of thought and practice that becomes richer, deeper, and more meaningful as you develop professionally. The*

> *successful educator is a thinking educator...Your philosophy is an integral part of who you are and everything you do. Your growth in this area, as well as in other areas of human endeavour, must be a dynamic and ongoing process* (Knight, 1989: p.132-133).

There are many influences that can contribute to this process. Specifically, what factors did the Bisset participants identify as encouraging or discouraging the growth of their own educational philosophies?

Factors That Encourage Philosophical Growth. In an effort to expand upon this data given by the individual participants, the staff were asked to respond to the survey question, 3). *Throughout your career, what factors have encouraged the development of your educational philosophy?* This question was asked as part of the same survey described in the previous chapter. The twelve respondents provided a variety of answers which are listed on Table 4, *Bisset School Survey Results: What Factors Encourage the Development of an Educational Philosophy?*

Summarizing the data on the chart, 20 factors were identified: Sue (Bisset's principal) and other principals, students, parents of students, variety of teaching experiences (including those at Bisset), University courses/professors, reading (including the newspaper), cooperating teacher (during practicum), being a parent (of preschool and school aged children), personality traits, working through drafting the Bisset educational philosophy statement, opportunities for discussion, reflection, and clarification of beliefs, colleagues, personal determination, time, articulation through modelling and practicing philosophical perspectives, teachers' own childhoods, family experiences, professional development opportunities (attending and presenting), politics, and working with student teachers.

While there were areas of commonality (Sue, teaching experiences, parenting experiences, colleagues, professional development, reflective practices, working at Bisset), it is interesting to note that there was a range of responses. The number of points raised by participants comprises a relatively extensive list for twelve people considering the limited time and space provided for them to respond. If educational philosophy were not a concept that they were familiar with, would the number of factors

TABLE 4
BISSET SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS: WHAT FACTORS ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY?

VALUE OF 8	VALUE OF 9	VALUE OF 10
- talking with colleagues about school activities, philosophy, and sharing of thoughts and ideas - inservices, seminars - realistic day to day working in the classroom - students and parents *(Participant H)*	- my principal - I have evolved with Sarah's philosophy for the past five years! It has been instrumental in shaping me as a teacher! - working with children and their families - politics/newspaper *(Participant G)*	- Sarah (current principal), most definitely - children - parents - experience - University (graduate studies) - reading *(Participant A)*
- administrators - students - parents *(Participant I)*		- U of A: by the time I was student teaching I had developed <u>my</u> philosophy/statement of beliefs; I put it in writing and just modify as I go - Later: more <u>experience</u> with special needs and big age groups - School: we drafted a lot (re: Bisset's philosophy statement), but I had a strong base first *(Participant B)*
		- being able to take risks - certain professors at University - cooperating teacher (during practicum) - being a parent - having kids (of my own) in the school system - my personality *(Participant C)*

			- opportunities to clarify what my beliefs actually were/are; discussions, writing, etc. via professional development at staff level, University level, conferences - people I have worked with: administrators, colleagues with whom I have worked closely - determination to do the best possible for students with whom I have worked *(Participant D)*
			- people who have touched my soul & spirit & career - people who have had gifts to share and allowed me to share mine - children who have become part of my collective wisdom (because I've watched, listened, noted, learned) - colleagues who have had ideas to try, comments to share - opportunity to demonstrate, share, reflect, build my philosophy - to try to articulate through modelling & practicing - time *(Participant E)*
			- teachers I had as a student - growing up in a great and fun family - working with a variety of staffs at high school and elementary schools, especially the group at Bisset *(Participant F)*

		- seeing children "in action" and learning about them; their development and their individuality first hand - my colleagues - professional development (learning from others, presenting to others) - being a reflective practitioner; taking the time to think about my teaching, my students *(Participant J)*
		- becoming a mother - working with Sarah (current principal) - years of experience - (working with) student teachers; explaining, reflecting, planning - speaking engagements (how do I, why do I) *(Participant K)*
		- University training - principals I've worked for - other teachers (colleagues) - students - experience (years of teaching) - different levels of students I've taught (e.g. by teaching years 3/4, I know where years 1/2 are going and vice versa; I know where 3/4's have come from) - being a parent - books *(Participant L)*

have been so considerable? Or, rather, would there have been many blank spaces?

Although many of these are directly related to experiences within schools, some factors come from influences external to the classroom (e.g., being a parent, family experiences, politics, reading the newspaper). This point serves to reinforce the theme discussed in the previous chapter and correlates with the notion that educational philosophy is a branch of a larger life philosophy.

Factors That Inhibit or Discourage Philosophical Growth. To extend our understanding of what encourages philosophical growth, it is also important to gain perspective on what impedes its development. To this end, participants were asked to respond to the fourth and final survey question, *4). Throughout your career, what factors have inhibited or discouraged the development of your educational philosophy?* Data gathered in response to this question is found on Table 5, *Bisset School Survey Results: What Factors Inhibit or Discourage the Development of an Educational Philosophy?*

A synthesis of the factors delineated by participants included the following points: philosophic conflict with colleagues, teachers, students, and parents; decisions made by those external to the school that are not philosophically synchronous with participants' views; lack of time and opportunity for growth/clarification/articulation; lack of freedom for philosophic choice, policies that limit thinking, minimal allowance for risks, passion, thinking, and questioning; curriculum; large class sizes and lack of one-on-one time with students; organization (of the school); and lack of resources.

It was interesting to note that some factors listed by participants as being encouraging to philosophic growth were also listed as being inhibiting to growth (administrators, colleagues, parents). This leads us to the most common response to this question which indicated that a philosophical mismatch (between the participant and administrators, between the participant and colleagues, and between the participant and parents or students) hindered philosophical growth.

Considering the high level of awareness of educational philosophy within Bisset School and the references made to experiences at Bisset as having encouraged

TABLE 5
BISSET SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS:
WHAT FACTORS INHIBIT OR DISCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY?

VALUE OF 8	VALUE OF 9	VALUE OF 10
- being in a school situation where other teachers do not share the same philosophy - working for a principal (in the past) that has a different philosophy *(Participant H)*	- NOTHING : something may have inhibited the implementation of my philosophy but not the development of it!	- limitations from up above coming down from top administration - from decisions made not necessarily in the best interest of the children - decisions made outside the school that don't match the way we see teaching and learning *(Participant A)*
- administrators - students - parents *(Participant I)*		- once before a controlling principal whose philosophy did not match mine, so growth and expansion were not encouraged or very possible as much as they might have been *(Participant B)*
		- some teachers I have had to work with - some principals I have had to work with *(Participant C)*
		- lack of time and opportunities to discuss/read/articulate/clarify etc. what beliefs are - "thou shalt do it this way only" attitude of some administrators *(Participant D)*

		- frameworks that take away my ability to think, to make relevant, to understand - too much to do (too complicated a life!!!) in too little time; chaos (which isn't always bad if the tunnel which confines the chaos has direction and a light!) - bureaucratic needs first; mandates as the lowest common denominator - negative people/prepackaged thought - no new ideas or an environment that doesn't allow passions, risks, thinking, questioning - put downs about ideas *(Participant E)*
		- the one power mad principal I ran into for <u>thankfully</u> just one year - not being on a unified staff (same year as above) *(Participant F)*
		- curriculum at times - the views of some parents - large class sizes; practicality *(Participant J)*
		- organization *(Participant K)*
		- parents of my students who do not believe in my educational philosophy - other teachers who do not agree with my philosophy - some of the curriculum - class size (large classes) - resources (lack of) - personnel (lack of one on one/one on two/one on three, etc. time with students *(Participant L)*

philosophical development, one would need to wonder whether these encounters with contradictory philosophies were completely negative? Is it that these factors and experiences were truly inhibiting for the participants, or did they actually produce the reverse effect of bringing their educational philosophies into sharper focus because these experiences represented negative cases? Is it possible that incongruity can unwittingly bring about growth, particularly if participants found a compatible philosophical ground when they came to Bisset?

According to Kircher (1974) it is frequently assumed by those who come into contact with an opposing philosophical perspective that this is an obstructive incident.

> *If there is anything characteristic of any system of philosophy, it is that it is sufficient unto itself. Of all the things it logically does not need in the world, it is the conflicting and denying assumptions and propositions of other philosophical systems. Or if it does need these, it needs them as the materials for its own assimilation and development. It needs them as the negative to its own positive, the error to demonstrate its own truth. It needs them as food upon which to feed, a process which results in the disintegration of the food and its assimilation into a growing body of thought which is designed to prevail through the disintegration of its opposition...*
>
> *In order to keep healthy, vital and growing, they need what they commonly hasten to deny; they need an abundance of as yet unexplained problems, aspects of the natural world and of the human enterprise that they have as yet been unable to assimilate into their own organic structure. Moreover, they need cross-fertilization with other systems of philosophy which they commonly attack with the intention of annihilation...Contests of explanation among philosophies and creative engagements over the problems that beset us result both in health and procreation of a rich diversity of philosophies* (Kircher, 1974: p.25-27).

In essence, philosophical dissonance can be analogous to the concept of figure and ground in the arena of art; one serves to bring clarity to the other by accentuating differences. Returning to Conway's belief-disbelief dimension as described in the previous chapter, there exists a duality for human beings that is necessary to bring clarity and definition to the question of what is to be embraced and what is to be rejected. It is such contrast, as well as the commonalities previously noted, that together stimulate philosophic

maturation.

Growing Together Philosophically at Bisset. Healthy philosophical growth requires both complementary and opposing philosophical landscapes. In the case of Bisset School, having a common (educational) philosophical foundation has been fundamental to the success of the school (based on the description of the Associate Superintendent in chapter 3), and to the growth of the staff. It is this communal educational philosophy that gives the group direction, a cohesive bond, and a basis for decisions and actions. But with such a high degree of commonality within the Bisset staff, we are left to wonder why the school does not simply stagnate in the absence of opposing viewpoints?

To see examples of this opposition, it is necessary to look beyond the site itself. At times, policies and actions of others within the district provide that contrast, that element of disbelief. Professional articles and other writings brought into the school also contribute alternate perspectives. And, as Sue noted in chapter 6 (*Defining Educational Philosophy and its Value*), Bisset is sometimes *"going against the current"* of trends. Having a reputation for being a school on the leading edge, this is not unlikely to be the case.

It appears that, in being aware of the need for growth at the outset, planning for opportunities to develop, and providing staff the **freedom to choose** a common philosophic path that often differs from the norm (versus mandating a direction), the administration of Bisset School have understood (both explicitly and tacitly) from the very beginnings of the school how to cultivate the ongoing process of philosophic maturation. It is perhaps the concept of free choice that best illustrates this understanding. As Kreeft noted,

> *...the method of philosophy is the free appeal to a free mind, while the method of technology is to coerce an unfree nature* (1984: p.43).

Defining (Educational) Philosophical Maturity at Bisset. Participants' descriptions of their own philosophic journeys and of the specific directions that they would like to travel towards provide insight into how they define the concept of a mature philosophy

of education.

The participants in this study indicated that they: 1) began with very minimal or no realization of their own beliefs, or 2) had some cognizance of their own philosophies when beginning their teaching careers. There is some disagreement amongst educational philosophers as to whether or not a teacher has an educational philosophy if he or she is oblivious to it. Knight (1989) stresses that, even though educational philosophy may be held unconsciously, it is nonetheless there by virtue of the fact that teachers are human beings who, explicitly or tacitly, hold philosophies of life.

> *Views on the nature and potential of students lie at the very foundation of the educational process. Every educator must of necessity have some conception of the nature of human beings, their personal and social needs, and some image of the ideal person* (p.18).

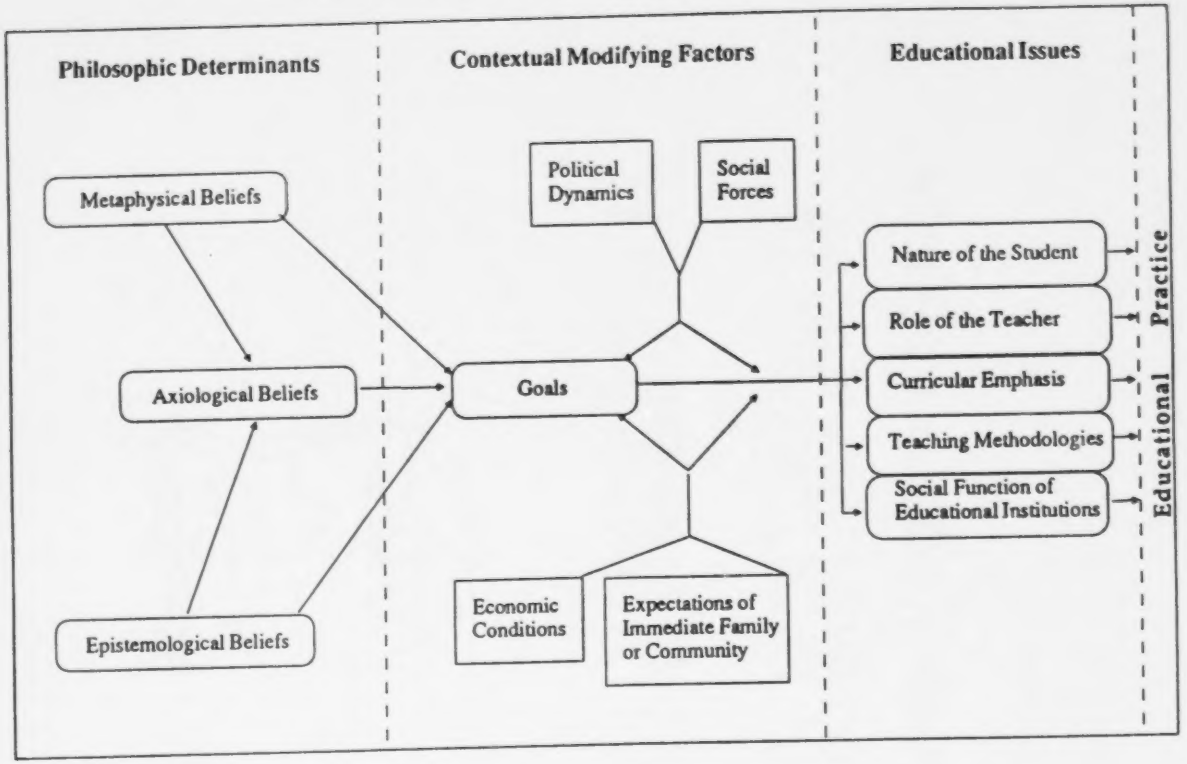
Knight expands on this thesis, connecting educational goals to philosophy (Figure 8).

> *...education (is) a deliberate process that has a desired goal. If this is the case, then educators must have some basis for arriving at a conception of that goal. Concern with a goal presupposes a world view or a philosophical viewpoint that involves a set of beliefs in the nature of reality, the essence of truth, and a basis for forming values...the "stuff" of philosophy. Philosophy, therefore, is a basic constituent in the foundation of educational practice.*
>
> *...a distinct metaphysical* (ontological) *and epistemological viewpoint will lead to a value orientation. That value orientation, in conjunction with its corresponding view of reality and truth, will determine the goals that will be deliberately aimed at the educational process. The goals, in turn, will suggest preferred methods and curricular emphases...varying positions on philosophic issues often lead to different educational practices when educators are consistent with their beliefs...The point to note is that it is important for educators to choose, select, and develop practices that are in harmony with their beliefs* (p.34-36).

Knight also notes that additional factors,

> *including political forces, economic conditions, the needs of the labour force, and the social conceptions of a particular population* (p.36)

FIGURE 8
THE RELATIONSHIP OF PHILOSOPHY TO EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE



Source: Knight, G. (1989). *Issues and alternatives in educational philosophy, 2nd edition.* (p.35).

will impact actual practice. However, he contends that philosophy provides *the basic boundaries for preferred educational practices* (p.36).

In addition to providing information regarding their educational philosophies at the outset of their careers, participants supplied details of what they considered to be desirable philosophic attributes to aspire to. This commentary, taken from various points in the transcripts, was paraphrased and then compiled. Participants were then asked to verify the list of characteristics found on Table 6, *Attributes of (Educational) Philosophic Maturity as Defined by Study Participants.*

A Final Note Regarding Philosophic Maturation. It should be noted that none of the participants involved in the study claimed to have fully "arrived" at the final stages of (educational) philosophic development as it is described in this chapter. Rather, it was expressed that philosophic growth was a journey to be made for its own sake, for personal development, and for the sake of stronger practice; not for the purpose of reaching a final end point destination.

When reviewing the factors indicated by participants as being encouraging of philosophic growth, and when noting the distinguishing features of the stages and phases of development as outlined above, the importance of dialogue as the classical vehicle for philosophic maturation must be addressed. Originally developed by Socrates, dialogue is viewed by philosophers as being critical to movement through an individual's journey of maturation. Bohm (1990) defined dialogue as follows:

> *I give a meaning to the word 'dialogue' that is somewhat different from what is commonly used. The derivations of words often help to suggest a deeper meaning. 'Dialogue' comes from the Greek word* dialogos. Logos *means 'the word', or in our case we would think of the 'meaning of the word.' And* dia *means 'through' - it doesn't mean two. A dialogue can be among any number of people, not just two. Even one person can have a sense of dialogue within himself, if the spirit of the dialogue is present. The picture or image that this derivation suggests is a* stream of meaning *flowing among and through us and between us. This will make possible a flow of meaning in the whole group, out of which will emerge some new understanding. It's something new, which may not have been in the starting point at all. It's something creative. And this* shared meaning *is the 'glue' or 'cement' that holds people and societies together.*

TABLE 6
ATTRIBUTES OF (EDUCATIONAL) PHILOSOPHIC MATURITY AS DEFINED BY STUDY PARTICIPANTS

- is consciously aware of own educational philosophy and can articulate it; translates beliefs into corresponding practice; educational philosophy provides the rationale for educational action
- is open to change, yet gives considerable thought to converting beliefs and requires much persuasive information (research, literature) or experience to make a paradigm shift; views the evolution of an educational philosophy as an ongoing journey
- can identify and understand the significant influences in the development of own educational philosophy
- can connect educational philosophy to own life philosophy; growth as a professional educator is part of growth in overall life
- educational philosophy is informed by experience, insights, research, and literature
- values own educational philosophy in relation to practice
- consciously searches for consistency within the various aspects of the educational philosophy (e.g. beliefs about assessment practices are consistent with beliefs about instructional practices)
- examines own educational philosophy in relation to the external environment as well as in the immediate context of own classroom or school
- seeks to discuss own educational philosophy with colleagues in order debate or forge a collective belief system; welcomes challenge as a way to clarify one's thinking
- continually revisits beliefs
- has a commitment to own educational philosophy, accepts responsibility and ownership for own beliefs
- views educational philosophy as being thought provoking; a catalyst for change and direction
- respects others' rights to hold differing philosophical perspectives; professional integrity guides debate
- the intentional development of an educational philosophy is done with the purpose of becoming a better person, teacher, and/or administrator for the sake of improving education for children and the broader community; it is not motivated by self-serving reasons such as advancement
- holds the view that educational philosophy often represents ideals worth striving for despite roadblocks; involves recognizing and accepting what can be controlled or changed and what cannot, and then working towards those ideals

> *Contrast with the word 'discussion', which has the same root as 'percussion' and 'concussion'. It really means to break things up. It emphasizes the idea of analysis, where there may be many points of view, and where everybody is presenting a different one - analyzing and breaking up. That obviously has its value; but it is limited, and it will not get us very far beyond our various points of view...Possibly you will take up somebody else's ideas to back up your own - you may agree with some and disagree with others - but the basic point is to win the game. That's very frequently the case in discussion.*
>
> *In a dialogue, however, nobody is trying to win. Everybody wins if anybody wins. There is a different sort of spirit to it. In a dialogue, there is no attempt to gain points, or to make your particular view prevail. Rather, whenever any mistake is discovered on the part of anybody, everybody gains...In a dialogue, everybody wins...*
>
> *Why do we need dialogue? People have difficulty communicating even in small groups...For one thing everybody has different assumptions and opinions. They are* basic assumptions, *not merely superficial assumptions - such as assumptions about the meaning of life; about your own self-interest, your country's interest, or your religious interest; about what you really think is important* (p.1-2).

Dialogue with self (e.g. reflective practice), with professional literature and research, and with colleagues and parents has been alluded to by participants as promoting philosophic development. However, at the time of data collection, the staff had not encountered dialogue as it is described by Bohm. Subsequent to this study, they have decided to pursue further learning regarding dialogue as a means of philosophic inquiry and communication in order to continue their individual and collective journeys.

Chapter Reflections

Since its opening in 1989, the Bisset staff have grown together both as a group and philosophically. These two areas of growth have most often been intertwined, leading the group to find a significant measure of its identity in its common beliefs regarding what is real, good, and true; both about life and about education.

A number of factors were identified by staff as being encouraging and inhibiting to (educational) philosophical development. The issues of philosophic commonality and

contrast were explored in the researcher's analysis as both being necessary elements to growth. As well, data related to participants' perceptions of attributes of various stages of (educational) philosophical maturation were presented.

The findings presented in this chapter and throughout the previous two chapters suggest that a significant factor in the evolution of the group and in the degree of philosophical maturation of individuals and of the staff as a whole has been leadership. This is the theme of the next and final chapter of findings.

Chapter 8

FINDINGS: CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

Practicing leadership means firstly, the act of working towards connecting voice, touch and heart;

voice the expression of the belief
touch the demonstration of your beliefs
heart the harmony of both.

Secondly, it requires actively creating a community that you want to be part of because this culture has your voice, touch and heart as its essence. It is our similarities that draw us together but our differences that keep the colors bright throughout the tapestry.
(Bisset Staff Handbook)

Introduction to the Chapter

The culture of Bisset School can be described as being healthy and open. Cultural leadership, largely on the part of the school's administration, has contributed to this in a variety of ways: by attending to what is important, deliberate role modelling, teaching, and coaching, criteria for allocation of rewards and status, and criteria for selecting staff.

Change has become a critical element of the Bisset culture. This has contributed to the ongoing the health of the culture.

What is School Culture?

Organizational culture (including the culture of schools) has been defined in a variety of ways. The following are examples of meanings ascribed to the concept of organizational culture.

> *...a pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by members of an organization. These beliefs and expectations produce rules for behaviour - norms - that powerfully shape the behaviour of individuals and groups in the organization* (Stonich, 1982: p.35).

> *...the source of a family of concepts. The offsprings of the concept of culture I have in mind are symbol, language, ideology, belief, ritual and myth* (Pettigrew, 1979: p.574).

> *...the culture in an organization is composed of patterns of beliefs and expectations. This ideological content is the social magnet that links individuals in committees and departments and also links the committees, departments, and people in the organization. While there are separate and distinct cultures for individual departments, there is also an overarching culture which is captured in the organization's philosophy and values* (Conway, 1989: p.143-145).

> *...the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic 'taken-for-granted' fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment...a pattern of basic assumptions - invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration - that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems* (Schein, 1985: p.6 & 9).

> *Culture describes the character of a school and reflects deeper themes and patterns of core values, common beliefs, and regular traditions that develop over time. This culture often exists outside conscious awareness and underneath everyday life, but it shapes everything inside the school* (Deal and Peterson, 1993: p.89-90).

> *...(culture) consists of the stable, underlying social meanings that shape beliefs and behaviour over time* (Deal & Peterson, 1990: p.7).

Culture is a human creation that exists and evolves over time. It represents stability for those living within the culture, providing them with tacit and explicit guidance regarding what is acceptable and what is not within the organization. It includes the *patterns of human behaviour embodied in values, thought, speech, and action* (Whitaker & Moses, 1994: p.143).

Culture as a concept is not a tangible, concrete "thing". However, from research literature, we have come to understand that manifestations of a school's culture can be found through a variety of means: artifacts (Spradley, 1980), ceremonies (Sergiovanni, 1990), dramatic events (Deal, 1985), traditions and rituals, heroes and heroines (Deal &

Kennedy, 1982), symbols (March, 1984), language (Schein, 1985), and stories and the cultural network (storytellers) (Deal, 1993). These manifestations provide clues to what is considered to be real, good, and true within a culture.

Healthy Cultures. Sashkin and Sashkin (1993, p.106) summarized and paraphrased Parsons' (1960) four crucial attributes of a healthy organizational culture: *adapting to change, achieving goals, working as a team, having a strong shared set of values and beliefs, and having a strong focus on the external community.*

Schein's (1985) perspective on healthy cultures is similar to that of Parsons, including the aspects of *internal integration (integration of its internal processes to ensure the capacity to survive and adapt*, p.50) and *external adaptation (survival in and adaptation to the external environment*, p.50). Tables 7 and 8 (*The Problems of Internal Integration*, and *The Problems of External Adaptation and Survival*) describes these two characteristics of culture in greater detail. Healthy cultures will also be relatively open cultures.

Open and Closed Cultures. Organizational cultures vary in their degrees of openness and closedness to new information and ideas. Where a culture rests on the open/closed continuum will have a direct bearing on its ability to accept and implement change.

> *A basic characteristic that defines the extent to which an organization's system is open or closed is the extent to which the organization can receive, evaluate, and act on relevant information received from the outside on its own intrinsic merits, unencumbered by irrelevant factors in the situation arising from within the system or from the outside* (Rokeach, 1960: p.57).
>
> *By looking at organizational belief structures as ranging from open to closed it may be possible to discern opportunities for increasing the likelihood of the organization receiving and acting on new technologies...Meetings are critical nodes for organizational coordination, decision making, problem solving, and change. If meeting behaviour shows an isolation of beliefs and disbeliefs, whether through extreme*

Table 7:
The Problems of Internal Integration

1. ***Common Language & Conceptual Categories.*** *If members cannot communicate with and understand each other, a group is impossible by definition.*
2. ***Group Boundaries & Criteria for Inclusion & Exclusion.*** *One of the most important areas of culture is the shared consensus on who is in and who is out and by what criteria one determines membership.*
3. ***Power & Status.*** *Every organization must work out its pecking order, its criteria and rules for how one gets, maintains, and loses power; consensus in this area is crucial to help members manage feelings of aggression.*
4. ***Intimacy, Friendship, & Love.*** *Every organization must work out its rules of the game for peer relationships, for relationships between the sexes, and for the manner in which openness and intimacy are to be handled in the context of managing the organization's tasks.*
5. ***Rewards & Punishments.*** *Every group must know what its heroic and sinful behaviours are; what gets rewarded with property, status, and power; and what gets punished in the form of withdrawal of the rewards and, ultimately, excommunication.*
6. ***Ideology & "Religion".*** *Every organization, like every society, faces unexplainable and inexplicable events, which must be given meaning so that members can respond to them and avoid the anxiety of dealing with the unexplainable and uncontrollable.*

(Schein, 1985: p.66)

Table 8:
The Problems of External Adaptation & Survival

1. ***Mission & Strategy***. *Obtaining a shared understanding of core mission, (and) primary task.*
2. ***Goals.*** *Developing consensus on goals, as derived from the core mission.*
3. ***Means.*** *Developing consensus on the means to be used to attain the goals, such as the organization structure, division of labor, reward system, and authority system.*
4. ***Measurement.*** *Developing consensus on the criteria to be used in measuring how well the group is doing in fulfilling its goals.*
5. ***Correction.*** *Developing consensus on the appropriate remedial or repair strategies to be used if goals are not being met.*

(Schein, 1985: p.52)

> *silence or excessive talk, then the culture structure may be signalling a tendency toward closedness* (Conway, 1989: p.153-155).

As Firestone and Wilson (1989) note, the management of new information within the culture is an important role of cultural leadership.

> *...principals can manage the flow of stories and other information in their schools* (p.283).

The way this flow is managed will impact the degree of openness or closedness of the culture. However, it is also important that leadership have a plan and a rationale for the selection and presentation of new information.

> *The rapid expansion of knowledge and, perhaps more importantly, the changing conditions to which knowledge must be applied mean that knowledge for the educational leader must be more like Hemingway's "movable feast" than a smorgasbord. In this sense the knowledge base must be selective and organized; it cannot be set out merely as anything and everything that somehow might be attractive...Educational leaders must possess knowledge of the potentials education has for the configuration of students being served and knowledge of the culture of schools as institutions* (McCleary, 1992: p.16-17).

McCleary continues by listing four fundamental sources of knowledge that are available to educational leaders: *what everyone knows, what practice demonstrates, what authorities say,* and *what research confirms* (p.18).

Whitaker and Moses (1994) examine the issue of openness of school cultures to new information through the presentation of research articles.

> *Supplying teachers with articles and research findings that contest existing practice works well when done in tandem with discussions and asking for written reactions. Even in the face of solid evidence, some staff members will cling to erroneous or outdated ideas demonstrating the depth at which cultural assumptions become buried. When teachers refuse to acknowledge or consider data that question current practice, they must be intellectually challenged and professionally required to defend their beliefs with logical arguments and evidence. The refusal to ponder information is one aspect of cultural conduct that cannot be tolerated by school leaders, for if it is, whim rather than substance will govern what happens to students in the school* (p.151).

Cultures of Effective and Successful Schools. Research literature on effective and successful schools indicates that a strong, healthy, and relatively open culture is an attribute of these institutions (Lipsitz, 1984; Sergiovanni, 1991). The principal who is aware of the importance of school culture can seize the opportunity to help shape the substance of the culture to promote success.

> *Strong cultures with appropriate content can promote school effectiveness, and principals can contribute to such cultures* (Firestone & Wilson, 1989: p.278).

Deal (1993) described group philosophy as being integral to strong school cultures. As indicated in the second chapter of this dissertation, holding a well established collective philosophy of education is also a trait of effective and successful schools (Edmonds, 1979; Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Brookover, Wilbur, Brady, Flood, Schweigen, Wisenbater, 1979; Bosser, Dwyer, Rowan, Lee, 1982; Greenfield, 1982; Lipsitz, 1984).

The Culture of Bisset School

Organizational cultures vary in their degrees of *potency* (Schein, 1985). When encountering a new culture, the degree to which the culture impacts the newcomer is an indication of the potency of the culture.

The culture of Bisset School can be described as being a potent as well as healthy and open one. For example, as noted in the site description in chapter 4, overt attention has been paid to the development of symbols and colours, a school motto, songs, and the collection of artifacts that signify the values of the school (including curriculum resource materials). The display of the history of the school also provides an example of the intentional formation and passing on of the culture.

The school's educational philosophy is very much an integral part of the school's culture. It is expected that decisions for practice made by individuals and groups within the staff be grounded in the collective philosophy, as the statement represents a blending of individual philosophies. This has been an requirement since the school opened, as

Marvin explained.

> *"Right from the very start, Sue decided that our school philosophy had to be in place, and that has made a very big difference. There are a lot of schools that have mission or philosophy statements that don't have any real meaning. But the focus of ours was, 'How is the school going to function? What is it going to stress, given all that we say works for kids, what are we going to say is important?' And what that gave us was a kind of litmus test to go back to all the time, to say, 'Is what we are doing consistent with our philosophy? Have we gotten off track here, is this something that doesn't fit?'*
>
> *"That has caused us some problems at times when things have been mandated from outside of the school that don't fit; for example, when we have held the mandate up to our philosophy, and we have said, 'That doesn't work with our philosophy. How are we going to bend the mandate? How are we going to keep doing what we know is right even though people from outside do not necessarily think so?' Even though that can be problematic, those situations can bring us together even more tightly* (F/95/05/09)."

How has this blending of culture and educational philosophy been achieved?

Bureaucratic and Cultural Linkages. Firestone and Wilson (1989 & 1993) identified *bureaucratic* and *cultural linkages* as being instrumental in achieving this kind of merging. These researchers distinguished between the two types of linkages as functions of management and leadership as follows.

> *Bureaucratic linkages establish constraints and opportunities for teachers...Bureaucratic linkage mechanisms include formal supervision, rules and procedures, plans and schedules, and information systems that include attendance reporting, grades, and tests* (Firestone & Wilson, 1993: p.22).
>
> *...cultural linkages work directly on people's consciousness to influence how they think about what they do. Cultural linkages affect at least two aspects of thought. The first is the individual's definitions of the task...What does it mean to teach? What should be accomplished by teaching? What techniques or approaches are available? What are the children like who are being taught? and so forth. The second aspect of thought is the individual's commitment to the task. Commitment refers to the individual's willingness to devote energy and loyalty to the organization and the attachment of that person to the organization. It*

> *includes a willingness to keep working in the school (continuance commitment), emotional bonds to the school (cohesion commitment), and a willingness to follow the rules and norms governing behaviour (control commitment)* (Firestone & Wilson, 1989: p.280).

While both types of linkages are consequential in their own rights, Firestone and Wilson contend that they need not be mutually exclusive; that the combination of the two can augment each.

> *The principal's task and challenge is to develop a clear vision of the purposes of the school that gives primacy to instruction and to carry it through consistently during those countless interactions. By doing so, the principal uses bureaucratic linkages to create opportunities for teachers to follow that vision and minimizes chances to operate in different ways. At the same time, the principal uses cultural linkages to communicate the vision so that, to a greater or lesser extent, it becomes the teachers' own culture... An important task for...the administrator is to ensure that bureaucratic and cultural linkages are mutually reinforcing* (Firestone & Wilson, 1989: p.286 & p.288).

One characteristic of the Bisset School administration and staff was their ability to combine both bureaucratic and cultural linkages in a way that coupled their school's culture and its philosophy with their practices. These examples also provide insight into how Schein's (1985) issue of *internal integration* is addressed and how the culture is signalling openness.

The Bisset Staff Handbook (subtitled *Our Collective Wisdom*) provided a clear illustration of how this was achieved. In addition to providing basic information on school policies, phone numbers, and general procedures, cultural details (including a brief history of the school and the origin of its name and the school songs) were also included. A philosophical framework was established for each of the areas of: organization of the school, parental involvement, curriculum, assessment, curriculum resource materials, teaching and the role of the teacher, and learning and the role of the learner. Several research articles were spread throughout the handbook to support the overall philosophical foundation, as were numerous quotations and pieces of poetry.

Bisset staff meetings were opportunities for both sharing information and for

reflection. During one staff meeting that the researcher attended, the major theme of the meeting was leadership and how each staff member could exemplify this quality as an individual and as a participant in the larger group. The principal requested that staff reflect in writing about how each member could be a leader, how they viewed their own contributions to their program teams and to the school as a whole, and how they perceived that they affected and were affected by those around them in their roles as leaders. This was done with the explicit assumption that all staff were leaders within the school. These written reflections were then posted on a staffroom wall that held other writings from previous staff meetings. Each member had a specific area within the space, and each individual's series of writings were arranged in the shape of the school's symbol (the bear). Following this activity, time was devoted to journal writing surrounding the questions, "What is 'leadership'? What does it mean? What impact do you have and what impact would you like to have on the school?" Small and whole group discussion followed. At that same meeting, the principal reviewed the group's priorities for the following school year: 1) placing an emphasis on translating the school's philosophy into classroom and whole school practices, 2) articulating and demonstrating the spirit of learning, and 3) focusing on the school's role within the immediate and city wide community, and how the school could be a central point in the community. A discussion about the importance of communication closed the meeting.

A second staff meeting that the researcher observed introduced a new format for the school's newsletter. A folded 11 X 17 piece of paper featuring a large white area on the front cover for students' own artwork was to be the new vehicle. In addition to presenting information to parents, the staff intended to use the newsletter to communicate and reinforce the school's philosophy.

Another example of meshing bureaucratic necessities and culture was found in the daily delivery of announcements. Rather than simply use the intercom system, the Bisset staff were able to utilize the school's cable television link to devise a form of closed circuit television broadcasting system. Using student "hosts", BTV (Bisset Television) was telecast each day in every classroom, featuring not only logistical data for staff and students, but providing information on student accomplishments and community events.

Students, staff, parents and the administrators appeared on these programs that began with segments from the school's official videotape. BTV represented an important cultural pipeline that allowed daily reinforcement of what the school stood for, what was happening within its walls, and the future direction that the staff and community envisioned.

During the period of data gathering for this research, a series of district and provincial achievement tests for students was administered. These tests were given in addition to quizzes and tests normally developed by the Bisset staff for assisting in determining levels of student attainment in relation to the graded curriculum. In preparation for these tests (an example of district and provincial bureaucratic linkages), the staff discussed several issues. These were summarized on chart paper which was then posted in the staffroom and remained for the duration of the testing period.

1. *How do we get kids ready to write?*
   - *in the context of our philosophy statement*
   - *in the context of our classrooms*

   How do we reflect on the practice after?
   - *how it felt, what they learned*

2. *What is our (the teacher's) role in working with the kids?*
   - *how do we help so that all kids are successful*

3. *How can we use this information?*
   - *how do we put it in context for ourselves*
   - *in the best possible interest for our kids*
   - *district -> to improve student achievement*

4. *What role do the kids take?*
   What role do the parents take?
   - *i.e. kids -> how to ask for help*
     -> how to ask for the specific help

The above four points demonstrate how the Bisset staff were able to connect this exercise, which represented a form of external bureaucratic linkage, to their own culture. Although the process of testing was imposed from outside the school itself, it was used as an opportunity to reinforce the collective beliefs of the staff and community and to uphold the internal cultural structure. It also illustrated how the school adapts to requirements

from beyond its own environment; a trademark of a healthy culture that aspires to survive in a climate of change (Parsons, 1960).

Educational Philosophy and Practice Informed by Research. The openness of the Bisset School culture to new information was evident at several levels. The sharing of research and professional articles, the expectation of teacher as researcher, and ongoing partnerships with the University are all examples of how the flow of new information is encouraged and managed at Bisset. Time was regularly set aside for the staff to develop written reflections on new ideas and information presented, for example, during staff meetings. While it is often the principal who directs this flow, other staff members also contribute articles or their own research. This is an illustration of shared leadership within the school.

The major goal in this sharing of information was to further the acquisition of what Schmoker and Wilson refer to as "best knowledge."

> *...knowledge and beliefs interact and inform each other. An ongoing emphasis on research and information is essential to sustaining improvement. It is an emphasis on.."best knowledge"...*
>
> *Where should this knowledge base come from?...Who can help to build the knowledge base to help the organization get what it wants? Who can influence the belief system that drives the organization? Who can prescribe what should be done to act on the knowledge base regarding what the organization wants? Who is the keeper of the success connections? The answer is: anybody. (Leadership is) open to all on an equal basis... Knowledge and expertise, not position, become the main source of power* (Schmoker & Wilson, 1993: p.45-47).

What constitutes this "best knowledge" will alter, as Sue explained.

> *"We've set up this school to be a researching school where we can ask questions and try to find out the answers. We need to provide leadership based on current knowledge, experience, strengths, and materials that we have available. That might change, as people change* (E/95/05/10)."

It was very important to Sue that educational philosophy and practice be continually informed by research. This conviction stems in part from her own varied background, as Mary explained.

> *"I think that you have to have a leader that has a vision, who knows what they believe about teaching and learning and what they believe about education. They also need to have a good background in theory and practice. I think that a lot of (educational) leaders may have moved up the ladder quickly and don't necessarily have the classroom teaching skills and experience. A good educational leader, like Sue, has that. She has consulting experience, classroom experience, administrative experience, gifts and talents as a visionary, her ability to work with people, her own life experiences including parenting; a whole background of knowledge and experience that she brings with her. She's done a lot of studying and reading, too. She keeps up with the latest things in the educational field. She has connections with people at the University. So, she has a real broad base* (A/95/04/25)."

The Relationship Between Vision, Educational Philosophy, and Purposing Within School Culture

The concepts of vision and educational philosophy are significant to school culture in themselves. However, when combined, they provide the third element of *purposing*. The three (vision, educational philosophy, and purposing) can be powerful forces in shaping and maintaining the substance and character of a school's culture.

Visionary Leadership. Setting priorities for the school and establishing a perception of what the school stands for are activities that lay the foundations for cultural leadership. This also includes looking beyond what currently exists and striving to make the school become more. Whitaker and Moses (1994) refer to this as *vision setting* while Sashkin (1993) names such thought *visioning*.

According to Endeman (1993), two characteristics of what she describes as "visionary leaders" include: (the ability to) *articulate philosophy and decisions* and to *use a loose-tight philosophy; tightly controlling core values, allowing individual latitude on implementation* (p.148-149).

Sue described the importance of vision in relation to leadership. She also connected the concept of vision to the other two critical roles of leadership as she views it.

> *"I believe that there are three essential components in a principal's role. One is creating a vision. Being visionary, which I think I am, is not easy.*

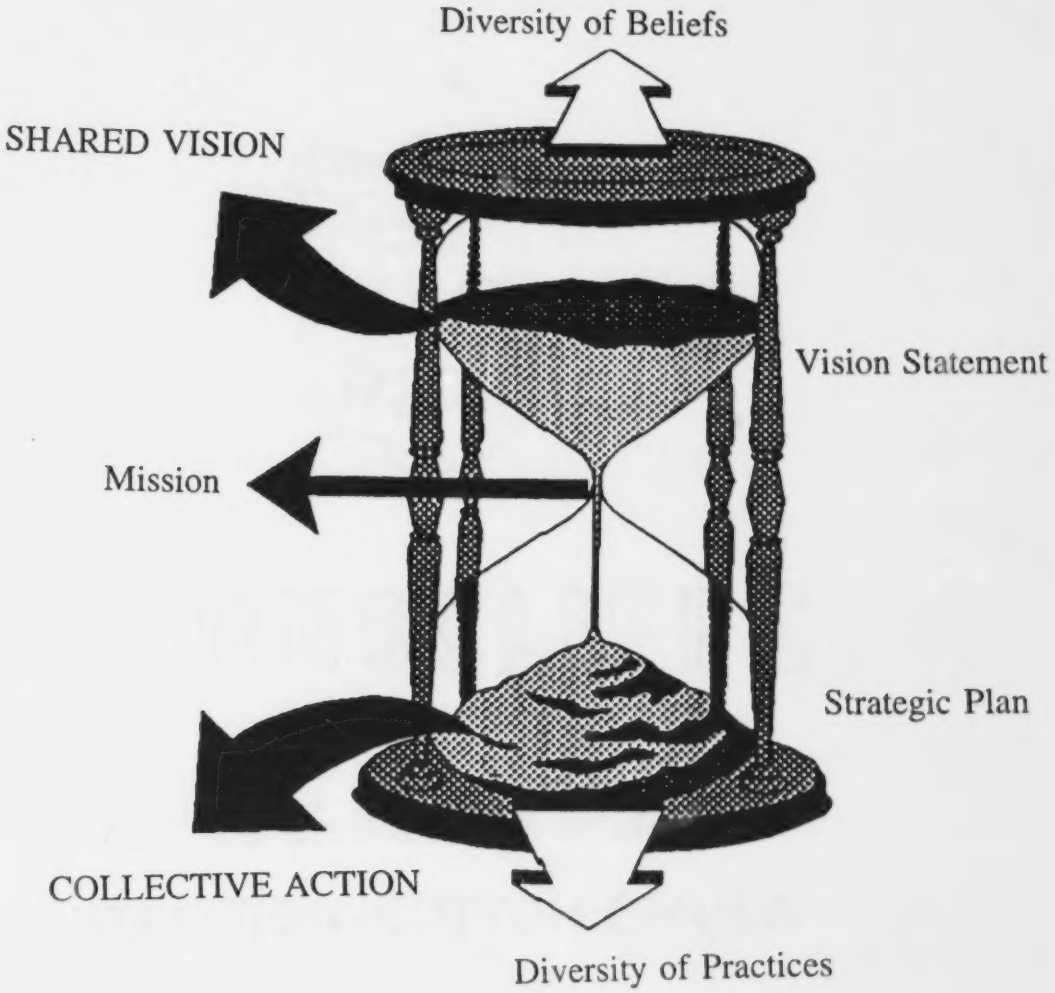
> *It's very difficult because you question people's beliefs. The second is ensuring that the educational philosophy is what binds everything together so that there is consistency in thought; not necessarily consistency in how we implement the thought, but consistency in thought with regard to what we are attempting to put into practice. Essentially, how can you have an educational philosophy that binds the threads of your tapestry for everything that you do? The third is helping, supporting, and encouraging people to move towards the vision and to have that philosophical consistency that connects beliefs and practices* (E/95/05/10)."

Moses and Whitaker (1994) expanded on Sue's perspective of vision and leadership using the analogy of the hourglass to articulate this more fully (Figure 9).

> *We define vision as an inspiring declaration of a compelling dream, accompanied by a clear scenario of how it will be accomplished. The vision must articulate magnificent hopes and expectations for the school and the people in it, clear values, a vital mission, alluring goals, and an intelligent plan of action...*
>
> *The vision is the driving force in the school and guides the definition of goals and the processes for reaching them... A vision must establish a quest for human and organizational performance that is undeniably worthy...*
>
> *The shared vision...provides the necessary context and criteria for making a meaningful self-appraisal of where the school is in relationship to where it should be in the future...Once the vital discrepancies are identified, collective actions should be taken that are congruent with the mission and given the utmost attention and resource support over several years.*
>
> *One of the important purposes for setting a school vision includes...laying the philosophical and practical groundwork...A vision must consolidate these ideas (the diversity of beliefs within a school community* [individual educational philosophies]) *to reach a mutually accepted direction...*
>
> *Diverse practices are welcomed and encouraged within this framework, provided they are loyal to the shared vision, mission, and strategic plan* (p.14-18).

A significant and highly evident characteristic of Bisset School is that vision has historically been viewed as going hand in hand with educational philosophy. This alliance is an important one, as noted in the literature.

FIGURE 9
THE VISION HOURGLASS



Source: Whitaker, K., & Moses, M. (1994). *The restructuring handbook: A guide to school revitalization* (p.16).

> *The key to this process (by which visionary leaders turn their cultural ideals into organizational realities) is creating an explicit organizational philosophy and then enacting that philosophy by means of specific policies and programs...The statement of philosophy must then be put into practice, by means of actual, operational policies and programs. That is, the philosophy must be articulated through action, not just words* (Sashkin, 1988: p.236).

Educational Philosophy and School Culture. The crucial role of educational philosophy in realizing vision is clearly illustrated in the above quotation. Mary reiterated this point in the context of the Bisset experience.

> *"The philosophy is really a focal point for us. We always come back to it, whether we're planning something new, taking a look at a new technology, at curriculum, at problem solving, or at assessment. We're always reminded of it and we're always reading it over again.*
>
> *"I think that a true philosophy is something that you live; it isn't just written down. There has to be action that matches the words. There is a connection between philosophy and the daily real life things that we do in our classrooms and as a whole school, and in our interactions: staff to staff, student to staff, parent to staff, parent to student. The philosophy must be carried through all those levels.*
>
> *"It's very important to start with the philosophy because it forms the base that pulls you together as a group who is forming common goals, and a collective belief about where you should be moving. It takes time to build a philosophy and I think you can grow together if you have a strong vision and a leader that can move you through some of the developmental stages* (A/95/04/25)."

Purposing: The Fusion of Vision and Philosophy. Melding vision and educational philosophy results in what Sergiovanni refers to as *purposing*.

> *The key to successful schooling is building a covenant comprising values and beliefs* [educational philosophy] *that bonds people together around common themes and provides them with a sense of what is important, a signal of what is of value. A covenant is a binding and solemn agreement by principals, teachers, parents, and students to honour certain values, goals, and beliefs; to make certain commitments to each other; to do or keep from doing specific things. It is the compact that provides the school with a sense of direction, on the one hand, and an opportunity to find*

> *meaning in school life, on the other. Value-added leaders bring to the school a vision but focus on the building of a shared covenant. The two together comprise the leadership dimension of purposing* (p.20)...
>
> *Purposing is concerned with vision (leader's hopes and dreams), school covenant (shared values and expectations), and the development of the school's mission (shared purposes).*
>
> *If purposing is to have value, it must be lived in the everyday interactions and actions of everyone in the school. The challenge of leadership is to translate values and ideas into actions and programs* (Sergiovanni, 1990: p.82).

The intentional creation of *purposing* is an act of cultural leadership.

At Bisset School, vision and philosophy are inextricably bound, providing a strong sense of purposing.

Cultural Leadership in Schools

Societal demands on schools have become so numerous and varied that the purpose of schooling is no longer universally and clearly defined. Such diversity in our collective understanding of the purpose of education often extends to school sites themselves. It is not uncommon for individual teachers on a staff to hold different opinions on this subject. Secondly, the nature of teaching has traditionally created isolation between teachers and between teachers and administrators. Firestone & Wilson (1989, 1993) cite both these reasons as primary inhibitors in the development of school cultures. Because neither of these conditions is likely to change dramatically in the foreseeable future, it follows that educators interested in developing a strong school culture will need to pursue that goal with a degree of intentionality. That is, strong school culture does not just happen; it requires leadership.

Culture is endemic. Contextually bound, it cannot simply be transplanted from school to school. Like the most fragile plant life, culture can rarely be transplanted directly to new soil and expected to take root. Rather, it is a "homegrown" entity that must be nurtured within the organization that conceives it. In a series of five case studies of school principals, researchers Deal & Peterson (1993) identified six major behaviours

associated with cultural leadership: *developing a sense of what is important, selecting faculty, dealing with conflict, setting a consistent example, telling stories that communicate value,* and the use of *ceremonies, traditions, rituals, and symbols as cultural builders* (p.93-96). Sashkin and Sashkin (1993) also discuss the strategy of *modelling values in action* (p.112). Sergiovanni (1990) notes:

> *cultural leadership comes from defining, strengthening, and articulating enduring values, beliefs, and cultural strands that give the school its identity over time...The behaviours associated with cultural leadership include articulating school purposes and mission; socializing new members to the school; telling stories and maintaining or reinforcing myths, traditions, and beliefs; explaining "the way things operate around here"; developing and displaying a system of symbols over time; and rewarding those that reflect the culture. The net effect of the cultural force of leadership is to bond together students, teachers, and others to the work of the school in a common cause* (Sergiovanni, 1990: p.87-88).

Schein (1985) describes five strategies for leaders to embed and transmit organizational culture.

> *The most powerful primary mechanisms for culture embedding and reinforcement are (1) what leaders pay attention to, measure, and control; (2) leader reactions to critical incidents and organization crises; (3) deliberate role modelling, teaching, and coaching by leaders; (4) criteria for allocation of rewards and status; (5) criteria for recruitment, selection, promotion, retirement, and excommunication* (p.224-225).

What is Attended To. When asked what Bisset school stood for, the principal referred the school philosophy. Part of this emphasis she attributed to her own interest in the philosophy.

> *"Part of what I do, too, is being very personally involved in the philosophy. I don't know how not to be. It's my belief, and based on my beliefs about life coming from my experiences. I don't know how not to be personally involved and passionate about it. In some schools the philosophy is placed on the wall and doesn't go anywhere. Perhaps this is because it's not a collective philosophy that is representative or reflective of individual, personal beliefs. It doesn't have that grounding.*

> *"We have set the philosophy to be the parameters of our decision-making in this school. Therefore, having a personal stake in the philosophy means that the school becomes a personal representation of my beliefs and of me* (E/95/05/10)."

Throughout the numerous examples given in this chapter and the previous three, it is very apparent that the collective educational philosophy is deemed to be very important. That it has such meaning and is so central to decisions for practice has been emphasized over and over again by the participants. This state can be attributed in large part to the fact a good deal of work has gone into the development of the philosophy statement and that attention is so frequently drawn it to ensure that it is being utilized as a touchstone for determining directions.

Role Modelling. When asked to describe her role in developing, adapting, and maintaining the school's philosophy, Sue responded as follows:

> *"Maintaining the school's philosophy, participating in its evolution, and keeping it in the foreground all take a lot of time, energy, and commitment. It is one of the most important things I do. Unfortunately, it's probably not what I spend most of my time doing. Often, in the reality of work, you spend more time doing things that are either the emerging crisis of the moment or the logistical scheduling problems that keep the school operating.*
>
> *"Some of the ways that I bring a focus to the philosophy are done quite consciously: talking with people about what my beliefs are, trying to continually articulate what I'm currently thinking, doing some of my own writing and sharing that with staff, doing a lot of modelling of things that I think are important and then occasionally telling people what I have been modelling, listening a lot (and not necessarily just listening to the words being spoken), and trying to give people the opportunity to be true to themselves and to understand their contribution to the shared voice, the collective experience, the collective wisdom. Other ways that I do this are accomplished unconsciously; it comes from me and my personality* (E/95/05/10)."

The importance that Sue ascribes to role modelling, by providing examples and being involved interactions across countless interactions with staff, students, and parents, is evident in this quote. It is also supported by participants' statements in previous chapters when they speak of Sue's leadership qualities.

Criteria for Rewards. Participating in the ongoing evolution and implementation of the collective philosophy are expectations for the staff, as is the role of teacher as researcher and reflective practitioner (see Chapter 4, *Site Description*). Sally indicated that Sue "rewarded" the staff by treating them as professionals, with trust, and with latitude to make and implement decisions as long as they were consistent with the school philosophy.

Criteria for Selecting New Faculty - Introducing New Members to the Culture. Somewhat like a living organism, the group existing within the culture has a dual dilemma: survival and adaptation to both external and internal forces. Culture seeks to resolve both these problems (Parsons, 1951; Merton, 1957).

When a new member is introduced to the culture, that person represents both external and internal issues that must be addressed (Schein, 1985). The process of enculturating an "outsider" to the point that the individual becomes a part of the shared knowledge and values that guide the behaviours of the group -- in effect becoming an "insider" -- varies from organization to organization. With regard to entering an educational setting, the means by which this occurs is complicated by the fact that the outsider will have prior cultural learning from previous schools where he or she has taught, from University and practicum training, and from his or her own experiences as a classroom student.

A successful process of enculturation generally integrates the new member in a way that allows for a continued sense of stability within the culture. It also ensures that the new member will help sustain the primary aims of the organization.

> *Strong organizational cultures...create meaning and help teach people how to behave in the organization so that top priorities are supported* (Endeman, 1993: p.149).

However, a less successful entry can be compared to a virus entering the organism. At best, this member represents an irritation that will eventually be absorbed into or dismissed from the culture. At worst, the new member becomes a threat to survival.

Sue explains her perception of the role of group philosophy in the staffing process.

> *"Philosophy ties into staffing, who you hire to implement the collective beliefs of the group. At this point, there is a collective belief in place*

> *about what schooling and education is. If I was hiring at this moment, I would have to ensure that a new staff member shared in that collective belief, because it would be too hard for them to have any distinctly different beliefs become part of our tapestry. The traditions are there, the expectations of one another are very well established. This is one of the ways that I try to maintain the school's collective, shared philosophy* (E/95/05/10)."

Sashkin and Sashkin (1993) refer to this phenomenon as *value-based staffing* (p.110).

Culture and Change

Although the research literature on cultural leadership does not directly emphasize the role of leader as an agent of change, it was a capacity that Sue embraced from the outset of her principalship at Bisset.

> *"I understand the change process because I've lived it this year, the human side of it.*
>
> *"Leadership often, by definition, is change. Often we are working towards something that isn't going to go smoothly all the time, so that not everyone is going to be happy. Status quo is comfortable. Comfort is necessary, but is that the endpoint that we want? We all need some comfort; that's one of the needs that we all have as people. But I'm not sure that that's an endpoint in terms of education and what we should be doing* (E/95/05/10)."

She has been able to make the expectation for change and growth an integral part of the culture. This is significant, because it is this factor that prevents the culture of Bisset (with its many internal philosophic consistencies) from stagnating. This is all the more critical because of the low staff turnover described by Marvin in chapter four. However, it is not a mix easily achieved.

Essentially, the concepts of culture and change are diametrically opposed. While culture stands for stability over time, change represents exactly the opposite. Change, particularly shifts in beliefs about what is real, good, and true, can bring about great distress for those experiencing the change. Deal (1993) describes this phenomenon.

> *Looking at the problem of change through a cultural lens, we see an*

> *entirely different picture. Culture is a social invention created to give meaning to human endeavour. It provides stability, certainty, and predictability. People fear ambiguity and want assurance that they are in control of their surroundings. Culture imbues life with meaning and through symbols creates a sense of efficacy and control. Change creates existential havoc because it introduces disequilibrium, uncertainty, and makes day-to-day life chaotic and unpredictable. People understandably feel threatened and out of control when their existential pillars become shaky or are taken away* (p.8).

By creating a strong philosophic base grounded in research and experience, the Bisset staff are able to explore and implement new directions without experiencing additional stress.

Secondly, Lippitt (1967) described the pivotal role classroom teachers play in the success of educational innovations.

> *We are discovering that the innovation and spread of high quality teaching practices is a different process from the spread of new developments in agriculture, medicine, and industry...in a social science field, such as education, the new invention is usually a pattern of human behavior, e.g., a new way of behaving toward a group of young learners. This cannot be passed along to others like a "thing". The adoption of the social practice or invention must be compatible with the values, attitudes and behavioral skills of the potential adopter. If not, changes in these complex interpersonal belief systems and behavior patterns are required* (p.308).

Essentially, Lippitt asserts that there must be a compatibility, a "fit", between teachers' philosophical orientations and the proposed change or that innovation will not be adopted and successfully implemented.

The strength of the school culture also affects how well change is received. Endeman (1993) noted that,

> *A strong organizational culture in schools helps members of the group develop constructive and responsible attitudes toward change. It helps define roles and promotes group cohesion that leads to goal achievement. Organizational culture also creates shared technical language and norms regarding teaching and the use of instructional time. Most important, it creates a shared mission and commitment among all members of the organization to achieve desired goals* (p.149).

Participant Perspectives on Change at Bisset. That change is necessary, positive, and to be anticipated are norms within the Bisset culture. Kathy explains how change impacts her as an individual teacher and the staff as a whole.

> *"How a person is affected by change will depend on how much work is involved and why the change is taking place. Our whole portfolio system is nothing but the word change, but you can fit that into your life and your teaching style. It's a little hard to accept change if you're disorganized or forgetful.*
>
> *"If I have more control over the change, if I understand the change and have input, it's much easier because I am more committed. It's my change; not somebody else's change. I own it, and I want to do it, to get involved. So many of the changes in this school have happened that way; we own them, we get involved, we want the change.*
>
> *"But I also think that you have to monitor how much change you undertake and why you're doing it. Some of the things that we do are very good, and what we need to do is reflect on them and repeat those things that worked well for us; keeping those intact for a while and then growing in another area, subject, or strategy.*
>
> *"Sometimes that can happen through trial and error. At certain points, some programming changes don't allow you to use the strengths that you do have and the program can go downhill in the name of change, growth, and development. There's no place for your strengths. Sometimes that can happen, so you need to be very careful and selective about change.*
>
> *"Usually our changes have been either gradual or an evolution. That's very palatable, and we have a sense of commitment. Because each teacher can implement the change a little bit differently, there is individuality with innovation.*
>
> *"When we are wise, there are anchors in the school's culture that help us during change: for example, a sound philosophy and dedicated teachers on the same track. We have a very strong core of beliefs that help make us compatible.*
>
> *"We were all hand picked and hired to this school for a reason. Sue could have picked from hundreds of people to replace almost each and every one of us. The prescreening that she does so well is from a wise principal who has very good people perception. She hires people who will fit this school. Being like-minded helps us with change* (B/95/05/08)."

Marvin also reflected on change as a process of growth that involves shared power.

> *"I've worked with fourteen different administrators, and I've come to the conclusion that there are basically two ways to get things done in an organization: 1) to scare people ('I've got the power, you don't. I will run the show.'), or 2) to spread the power out a bit, and let people grow. Sue is excellent at doing the second; it is an amazing strength that she has. She spreads the power, and a lot gets done, and done really, really well.*
>
> *"With Sue, you're allowed a time of growth with some parameters, and then we come back together to share and blend* (F/95/06/09)."

Sally described Sue's legacy at Bisset School as one of encouraging risk and challenging staff to stretch.

> *"The thing that we would remember about Sue is that she let us be us, to take risks and to grow. Everybody at this school has learned and has grown so much. We are always learning so much from each other and so much from her. I remember that my first reaction coming here was, 'I know I'm going to learn a lot, just by looking at you people.'*
>
> *"I think, too, that she would be known for her portfolios. She brought her vision, her thoughts, her creativity, and her philosophy to us and then we developed and experimented, and tested it out; but all of that has really been from her, the whole portfolio process.*
>
> *"It would be very difficult for another principal to try to change everything that we have built with Sue. We're such a close-knit staff and we have such a strong philosophy, I don't know if anybody could do that* (C/95/05/18)."

The vital part that Sue has played as a cultural leader who welcomes and fosters change is evident in these quotes. It is also apparent that change is not made for its own sake; rather, growth is encouraged in order to move the school closer to the collective vision and to more fully realize the educational philosophy statement that holds such significance for making decisions for practice.

Chapter Reflections

The administration's awareness of the intricacies and relevance of organizational culture and the impact of positive cultural leadership are depicted in this chapter. It is this leadership that has contributed to the findings described in the previous three chapters.

Chapter 9

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Translating philosophy into curriculum (and other school practices) *is the most difficult feat for schools to accomplish. The translation to climate and organizational structure appears to be much easier for (successful) schools than the translation of purpose into curriculum*
(Lipsitz, 1984: p.188).

Introduction to the Chapter

At the outset of this dissertation, five questions were posed. Highlights of the answers to these questions (as based on the data presented in chapters five through eight) are reviewed.

There are three primary conclusions that have been drawn. These are considered under the headings: **Educational Philosophy at the Fore, Focusing on the Whole**, and **Weaving the School's Cultural Fabric**.

Review of the Research Questions

In chapter one, the research questions for this dissertation were outlined.

1. By what decision making process does one school select curriculum resource materials? Of what significance is this process?

2. What is the principal's perception of his or her role in developing, adapting, and maintaining the school staff's group philosophy of education?

3. What can be learned about individual teachers' thinking through a discussion of the criteria they use to select curriculum resource materials?

4. What factors do teachers see as supporting or inhibiting the development of their individual educational philosophies?

5. What can be learned about the culture of a school by examining curriculum resource materials as artifacts of that culture?

The Process for Selecting Curriculum Resource Materials. As an Edmonton Public School, Bisset operates within a site-based management model. This means that the staff and administration (with input from the community) develop an annual budget that includes results statements for the year. It is from the funds granted the school through the budgeting process that staff salaries are paid, the building is maintained, programming is provided, and services and supplies (including curriculum resource materials) are purchased.

The processes for selecting curriculum resource materials were characterized by four features: curricular purpose, investigating possible choices through a variety of sources (including making one's own resource materials - a possibility favoured by the participants in the study), consistency with the collective educational philosophy, and making choices collaboratively.

This selection process was significant because it provided insight into how other decisions are made within the school, specifically, with an emphasis on collaboration and aligning decisions for practice with the school's educational philosophy. In the event of conflict, participants expected that the principal would challenge their choices in the context of fit with the collective philosophy.

The Principal's Role With Regard to the Collective Educational Philosophy. Sue, the Bisset School principal, explained her role in developing, adapting, and maintaining the group philosophy of education, highlighting six points: being personally committed to keeping the philosophy consistently in the foreground as the peramaters for decision making; consciously articulating (verbally and in writing) her onw beliefs and thoughts; modelling; listening; encouraging, challenging, and allowing others to risk and grow within their own beliefs; and being personally involved in the group philosophy as it is a reflection of her own beliefs.

Additional ways that Sue accomplishes this include:

° by making simaltaneous use of bureaucratic and cultural linkages;

° by emphasizing that educational philosophy and practice must be informed by ongoing research, experience, and reflection;

° by ensuring that the school's philosophy binds everything together;

° by rewarding staff with trust, treatment as professionals, and allowing them to latitude to make and implement decisions that are consistent with the group philosophy;
° and by recruiting staff members whose philosophic orientations are synchronous with the collective, shared philosophy.

Individual Teachers' Thinking. Participants viewed their respective roles as teachers as part of who they were as people. Therefore, it made sense to them that their individual educational philosophies should stem from their broader life philosophies. They believed that having a well articulated educational philosophy is critical to the effectiveness and success of their own teaching as well as impacting the overall effectiveness and success of the school; that having a strong group educational philosophy gives coherence, direction, and provides the *why* to guide the *how* of practice. They perceived that educational philosophy should be played out in daily actions and interactions, including the selection of curriculum resource materials.

Participants also cited their experiences at Bisset as being unique and contributing greatly to their philosophical growth. It was apparent that their development as individuals had happened simaltaneously with the evolution of the group as a whole. This parallel process helped them to grow philosophically closer as well as stronger as a group.

Supporting or Inhibiting the Development of Educational Philosophy. Participants in the study identified a range of factors that had encouraged their own (educational) philosophic growth:

Similarly, they listed several factors that they perceived as having inhibited the developmentof the individual philosophies of education:

While having a common philosophical foundation was noted by participants as having contributed to their growth and contrary philosophical perspectives were described as being inhibiting, it is necessary to have both congruence and contrast for philosophic development to take place.

Growth of their individual educational philosophies was viewed by participants as being a kind of never ending journey. They were able to identify where they were philosophically at the beginning of their teaching careers and where they would like to be philosophically as they continue to grow.

While dialogue a the classical vehicle of philosophic evolution was alluded to in the data, the staff had not dcliberatley explored it as it was described in chapter 7 of this dissertation. However, subsequent to this study, they have chose to pursue dialogue further.

Curriculum Resource Materials as Artifacts of the Bisset School Culture. The Bisset curriculum resource materials are significant in their own right because they are artifacts that are representative of the larger school culture. While the processes for selecting these resources exemplify norms for behaviour, the materials are manifestations of the culture, symbolizing the *values* and *basic assumptions* of those living in the school. Very careful attention has been paid by the administration from the beginnings of the school and the creation of its culture to ensuring that there is congruence between these *basic assumptions* (related to life philosophy) and *values* (realted to the group educational philosophy) and curriculum resource materials as artifacts.

Educational Philosophy at the Fore

Educational philosophy holds a significant position in the foreground of Bisset School's daily life. It is not viewed as an abstraction with no pragmatic value outside of the pages of pedagogy texts. Rather, it is seen as being integral to practice and to the culture of the school.

This has been achieved largely through the leadership within the school, particularly on the part of the principal, Sue, who has articulated and modelled the importance that educational philosophy holds for her. She has selected staff whose philosophic orientations are complementary to those of the school, but has taken the additional step of continually challenging those people to clarify, to grow, and to consistently demonstrate those beliefs through practice.

A key characteristic of this process of challenging has been to ask questions on an ongoing basis, to require the staff to be reflective practitioners. Over the history of the school, much time and thought has been devoted to deliberating the essence of a series of broad questions regarding purpose and practice (Table 9, *Bisset's Questions Regarding*

Purpose and Practice). This list is similar to that of Smyth (1987) (see chapter 2, *Educational Philosophy and Reflection*). Although the asking of these kinds of questions cannot be traced to specific times and dates, it is apparent that the substance within them has been addressed. The data, drawn from multiple sources, supports this.

TABLE 9
BISSET'S QUESTIONS REGARDING PURPOSE & PRACTICE

° What do I percieve to be the purpose of education?
° What is my conception of my role as a teacher? What theories of teaching do I hold to be real, good, and true? Why do I believe in these perspectives?
° What capacity do I assume that parents should fill with regard to their child's education?
° What is my view of students as learners (e.g., individuals, "empty vessels" to be filled with knowledge, miniature adults)? What theories of learning do I hold to be real, good, and true? What responsibilities do I judge that students should have for their learning and behaviour? Why?
° How do I believe students should be organized or grouped (e.g. by age, by grade, family groupings)? Why?
° How do I view and define the curriculum? What content and experiences should the curriculum encompass? Do I maintain that there should be one curriculum for all students, or should accomodations be made? Should differences between individual students be addressed? Why or why not?
° How do the resources that I use reflect my beliefs? Are they consistent or at odds with what I regard to be real, good, and true about effective teaching and learning? Do I consciously think about these tenets when I choose resources?
° What do my assessment and reporting practices say about my expectations for student learning?
° How does my educational philosophy relate to my broader life philosophy, and vice versa?

Finally, attention has been maintained on educational philosophy by directly and continually revisiting it in the context of making decisions and taking action in ways that manifest those beliefs.

Focusing on the Whole

There have been numerous examples within the findings that suggest a focus on the whole. That is, when one specific area of action is being considered by the Bisset staff (e.g., the selection of curriculum resource materials), it is also explored in relation to the other seven aspects identified in this thesis (purpose of education, organization of the school, teaching and the role of the teacher, assessment and reporting of student progress, curriculum, learning and the role of the learner, the role of parents, and curriculum resource materials).

Secondly, there exists an emphasis on acting as a member of the school as a whole. Collaborative decision making as it was described by participants illustrates this point (see chapter 5, *Curriculum Resource Materials Reflecting Educational Philosophy*). Teachers are not operating independently of one another or independently of the collective philosophy. Rather, there is interdependence.

Finally, decisions regarding action are consistently grounded in the group's educational philosophy which is, in turn, based on common individual beliefs regarding what is real, good, and true about teacing and learning. As participants indicated in chapter 6, educational philosophy provides them with the *why* so that they can then decide *how*. It is this kind of wholeness that appears to bring coherence to the overall functioning of the school.

Carr (1986) describes the distinction between *coherence* and *incoherence* as follows:

> *Criss-crossed and interrupted by other events, extended and complex experiences and actions can lose their coherence for us...(the) sense of their hanging together or connectedness. Stocktaking, reflection,...deliberation: these are all expressions for the act of restoring our temporal grasp on experience or action when that grasp seems to be slipping. In the case of action, changing circumstances can bring it about that plans have to be altered to varying degrees, or even completely abandoned. We all know what it is to "lose track" of what we are doing while we are doing it. In some cases it may be perfectly clear <u>what</u> we are doing in the immediate sense (hammering a nail, writing a memo) but not <u>why</u> we are doing it, that is, <u>how</u> it fits into or hangs together with a larger project and the other actions that belong to it. It becomes detached from its original purpose and stands isolated in time from its*

> *"surroundings", that is from what precedes and follows it. The larger project, of which it and other sub-actions are parts, has disintegrated for us, has lost its wholeness, completeness, or coherence* (p.87).

As the pace of teaching increases, it becomes much easier to "lose track" of the overall purpose and meaning of educational action, to forget how and why the separate acts of the day link together to bring coherence. Yet, the Bisset staff appear to have maintained that sense of wholeness through consistent effort.

It has been their collective educational philosophy that has provided them with guidance, a basis for embracing some innovations and practices while quite literally repelling others. At a time when the winds of educational change seem to be blowing with gale force, they have a foundation which they constantly revisit and can use to compare and contrast new ideas and ideals against. Having an explicit awareness of what they believe appears to provide them with a confidence that is becoming less common in today's teaching profession.

Weaving the School's Cultural Fabric

The artful weaving of the school's cultural fabric requires much intentional thought and action if the design is to have the beauty and unity that its creators intend. Without such intentionality, a patchwork pattern made of odds and ends will quickly accumulate and be held together only loosely by threads that will link more by happenstance than by design. In essence, the crafting of the culture cannot be left to serendipity.

The vision provides the dream for the cultural design. The energy and enthusiasm spawned by the conception of the vision drive the selection and gathering of the threads of the warp and weft that will intertwine to craft the fabric. Once the intended design begins to take hold, it is the vision that continually keeps the edges from fraying.

Inspiring and securing others' commitment to seeing the design come to fruition, to tending the threads that may ravel, to facilitating necessary changes to the original pattern as it unfolds - these are the challenges of cultural leadership.

The cultural fabric of Bisset School, as a human construction, is an entity that encompasses individual and collective educational philosophies, practices born of those

philosophic perspectives, and manifestations of the culture. These are the warp and weft of the fabric, while the vision provides a third dimension that brings additional life, meaning, and direction to the design. In addition to providing the overall blueprint, it binds the edges. Time, encapsulated in the school's history, adds a fourth and very significant dimension as culture exists and grows across the lifespan of the organization that created it (Figure 10). It is significant that, although the fabric is not a tangible object in the most literal sense, there is a common, collective image of it amongst the staff.

The colours, patterns, and textures of the cultural fabric will vary from school to school, with no two being identical. However, the Bisset fabric gives us one example of careful weaving. Although there is some variation and flexibility within the overall design (e.g., differences in philosophic emphases between individual teachers), there is a definite symmetry that reflects a great deal of internal consistency. There has also been a continuing effort on the part of the school's administration to continually revisit the notion of where the Bisset design fits within the broader community. Thus, we have a greater awareness of how the cultural health issues of internal integration and external adaptation (Schein, 1985) have been addressed in one school.

A Personal Footnote

One characteristic of hermenuetic inquiry is that, through the research process, there is some change within the researcher.

In this instance, the change has been to my perspective on the nature of educational philosophy. Specifically, I have come to value the poetic nature of educational philosophy when it is truly exemplary of beliefs.

While it is very necessary for each of us to have a firm understanding of our answers to the questions posed on page 158 (Table 9), and to be able to link those responses to form an internally consistent, coherent whole, we need not limit our expression of our beliefs to these responses. We can go beyond the "nuts and bolts" of the elements that comprise a philosophic statement and begin to craft words that evoke a much more

FIGURE 10

WEAVING THE SCHOOL'S CULTURAL FABRIC

Philosophical Perspectives Translated Into Practice

Beliefs about the Purpose of Education					
Practices Related to Purpose					
Beliefs about Organization of the School					
Organizational Practices					
Beliefs about Teaching & the Role of the Teacher					
Teaching Practices					
Beliefs about Assessment					
Assessment Practices					
Beliefs about Curriculum					
Curriculum Practices					
Beliefs about Learning & the Role of the Learner					
Learning & Learner Practices					
Beliefs about the Role of Parents					
Practices Related to the Role of Parents					
Beliefs about Curriculum Resource Materials					
Practices Related to Curriculum Resource Materials					
	Artifacts	Ceremonies, Traditions, Rituals, Dramatic Events, Heroes/ Heroines	Symbols	Language	Stories & the Cultural Network (Storytellers)

HISTORY

VISION

Manifestations of School Cultures

VISION

personal, soulful representation. In the past, I would have been content to describe my own convictions about education in a rather anemic, unemotional fashion. Now, I find myself at a point in my own journey where I am challenged to express those beliefs with words like "dreams", "aspirations", and "honour".

The development of an educational philosophy is a highly creative activity that should represent something of ourselves, our values, and the very essence of what stirs our souls and passions with regard to our profession. From this perspective, we can begin to appreciate the poetry of educational philosophy.

A Final Statement

In the introductory chapter of this dissertation, two diametrically opposed statements were presented.

1. **Educational philosophy plays an integral role in teachers' choices of curriculum resource materials.**
2. **Educational philosophy is irrelevant to the curriculum resource materials selection process.**

The first statement was intended to represent a theoretical proposition, while the second was to represent its antithesis. Woods and Barrow (1975) refer to this antithetical relationship as the *'educational theory/educational practice' dichotomy* and discuss it in the context of educational philosophy and educational practice.

> *Theory and practice, in the educational context, are often dramatically opposed: 'It may be alright in theory, but it won't work in practice', 'I've got no time for all this theory, I'm a practical man', 'Theory gets you nowhere.' The implication of such remarks, of course, is that theory is one thing and practice another, totally different thing, that theory is essentially a useless activity carried on by starry-eyed dreamers who have no knowledge of, and no interest in, practical realities...*
>
> *Let us consider (this) objection to the effect that thinking things through in a philosophic fashion is unrelated to what people do. Taken at its face value this is surely an untenable position...How can there be a selection of activities to be carried on in schools without prior thought being given to the question of what ought to be done and what ought not to be done,*

and why?...

It is very difficult to believe that reflection on curriculum and teaching techniques does not provide, and never will provide, assistance to a serious-minded teacher intent on doing a good job...

Theory and practice are intimately interconnected and that rigid dichotomy between them finding expression in 'Theory is one thing, practice another' is a false dichotomy...

(If) what is wanted from theory is a set of directions enabling teachers to control their children, to keep discipline, a set of directions telling teachers what to do with youngsters who don't want to learn anything, are rebellious and so on.. (then) clearly, philosophical theorizing alone cannot provide direct, detailed specifications of this kind...Nevertheless careful thinking might ameliorate the conditions under which some teachers operate (p.181-187).

Certainly, the faculty of Bisset School would concur with Woods' and Barrow's position.

Throughout the preceding pages of this dissertation, a portrayal of how and why one school adheres to the first statement has revealed insights far beyond how and why they select curriculum resource materials. By exploring one "slice" of life at Bisset School, we have come to a greater appreciation of the meaning and value that they ascribe to educational philosophy, and how it has been an integral ingredient in their growth as individuals and as a staff. We have examined the leadership that has nurtured the current culture of the school; a culture that encompasses the philosophic orientations of the staff who live within it.

Thus, we conclude this dissertation with the hope that it represents a beginning for those who read it and who wish to consider for themselves the integral or irrelevant role of educational philosophy in the selection of curriculum resource materials and beyond.

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Yin, R. (1994). *Case study research - Design and methods, 2nd edition.* London: Sage.

Yorke, D. M. (1987). Constructing classrooms and curricula: A framework for research. *British Educational Research Journal, 13*, 1, 35-50.

Zais, R. S. (1976). *Curriculum principles and foundations.* New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

APPENDIX A: CASE DATA BASE

March 23/95	Initial visit to school, orientation by principal; confirmation of willingness to participate in the study; initial observations of physical building; receipt of school handbook and budget documents; establishing rapport with principal and curriculum coordinator
April 10/95	First meeting with whole staff to explain the purpose of the study; request for individual participants; establishing rapport
April 25/95	First interview with Participant A; establishing rapport; overview of Informed Consent Form; repertory grid analysis
April 25/95	Whole staff meeting; observations, field notes
May 1/95	First interview with Participant B; establishing rapport; overview of Informed Consent Form; repertory grid analysis
May 3/95	Second interview with Participant A; discussion of results of repertory grid analysis
May 3/95	Invitation to attend primary team planning meeting, 4:00-9:00 p.m. in the home of a staff member; establishing rapport with new participants
May 4/95	Second interview with Participant B; discussion of results of repertory grid analysis
May 8/95	Third interview with Participant B; discussion of educational philosophy web as inferred by researcher; changes and additions made to the web; participant shares her professional portfolio
May 8/95	Interview with Participant D in the school library regarding school's curriculum resource materials collection and history of their acquisition
May 9/95	Whole staff meeting; observations, field notes
May 10/95	Interview with principal (Participant E) regarding her role in developing, adapting, and maintaining the school's collective philosophy

May 10/95	Third interview with Participant A; discussion of educational philosophy web as inferred by researcher; changes and additions made to the web; participant shares her graduate research and her changing perceptions of curriculum
May 11/95	First interview with Participant C; establishing rapport; overview of Informed Consent Form; repertory grid analysis
May 15/95	Second interview with Participant C; discussion of results of repertory grid analysis
May 18/95	Third interview with Participant C; discussion of educational philosophy web as inferred by researcher; changes and additions made to the web; participant shares information regarding her (educational) philosophical growth
June 7/95	First interview with Participant F; establishing rapport; overview of Informed Consent Form; repertory grid analysis
June 9/95	Second interview with Participant F; discussion of results of repertory grid analysis
June 12/95	Third interview with Participant F; discussion of educational philosophy web as inferred by researcher; changes and additions made to the web; participant shares information regarding the importance of parents to his program and the school as a whole; shares information regarding interests in outdoor education and physical education
June 13/95	Whole staff meeting; explanation and distribution of surveys
June 16/95	Collection of surveys
June 23/95	Copies of letters of thanks and transcripts distributed to individual participants; thank you gift to the school
August 31/95	Presentation of preliminary findings to staff including Barkerville's Partial Constellation of Beliefs for feedback
October 19/95	Delivery of draft of first chapters for feedback
December 15/95	Delivery of draft of last chapters for feedback
January 24/96	Delivery of final draft for feedback

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCHER: Joanne Tranter, B.Ed., M.S., Ph.D. (candidate)
Faculty of Elementary Education
University of Alberta

ADVISOR: Dr. Sylvia Chard, Associate Professor
Department of Elementary Education
University of Alberta

This is to certify that I, _____, hereby agree to participate in the above named researcher's project. I understand that the purpose of the research is to investigate one aspect of teachers' thinking: the process of selecting curriculum resource materials for teaching.

I consent to be interviewed by the researcher and to have the interview taped. I understand that the contents of the taped conversation will be heard only by the researcher, and that I will be given a transcript of the interview to examine. Both the tape and the transcript will be coded, and my name will not appear on any documents derived from this study. A pseudonym will be used in the dissertation resulting from the study and the identity of the school will not be revealed unless all participants agree to do so. I understand that my supervisor will not be given a copy of the transcript, only the report in its final draft form.

As well, I agree to participate in a computer assisted repertory grid analysis. I understand that a copy of the computer print out will be given to me and identified only by code.

I understand that I am free to decline responding to specific questions asked by the researcher during any portion of the study. I may withdraw my participation at any time during the study, without penalty.

I understand that I will be given a letter confirming my participation in the study as a professional development activity. Should I choose, a copy of this letter will be delivered to Personnel Services to become part of my employment file.

I understand that I have the right to review a draft copy of the dissertation and to review any subsequent articles for publication in professional journals. I also understand that a copy of the dissertation will be available for Edmonton Public Schools staff to access through the Centre for Education's professional library.

_____
(Signature of Participant)

_____
(Date)

_____
(Signature of Researcher)

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

Joanne Tranter, B.Ed., M.S., Ph.D. (candidate)
Faculty of Elementary Education
University of Alberta
492-3840

Dear Colleague:

This letter is an invitation to participate in a research study to investigate one aspect of teachers' thinking: the process of selecting curriculum resource materials for teaching. I would like to conduct a case study of your school's selection of resource materials for the 1995-96 school year. The data gathered during the study would be used in a doctoral dissertation and may be used in future publications of professional journals. As well, a copy of the final dissertation will be made available to district staff through the Centre for Education professional library.

The majority of the study would take place during the latter part of April and the month of May. It would be my wish to observe the staff during meetings related to choices of curriculum resource materials and to gather data on this process. This portion of the study requires no additional time other than what you would normally commit to meetings of this sort.

In addition to observing the staff as a whole during this process, I would like to work with individual volunteers on a more indepth basis. Participants involved in this aspect of the study will be asked to do the following:

1. Work with the researcher to complete a repertory grid analysis with the aid of a computer (time required will be approximately 90 minutes). This phase will involve you describing twelve curriculum resource materials that you utilize in your teaching.

2. Participate in two follow-up interviews that will be taped and transcribed (time required for each interview will be approximately 60 minutes).

Times for these discussions will be arranged according to your individual schedules (before or after school hours, evenings, or weekends). It would be my hope that participating in this more indepth portion of the study would be a professional development activity for you. The time required will be the equivalent of a half day inservice. Therefore, I will supply you with two copies of a letter confirming your participation in the project. Should you wish, I will deliver one copy of the letter to

Personnel Services to be placed on the professional development section of your file. As well, I would be very willing to teach your students for an hour in June in order to give you some time to devote to other activities.

Any data gathered from work with individual teachers will be coded and stored in a separate envelope so that only I will know the identities of participants. If you choose to take part in this individual aspect of the study, copies of all contents of your own envelope will be given to you, and will not be shared with your colleagues or supervisor. Pseudonyms will be used in the final dissertation, and the name of your school will not used unless all participants agree.

Your participation in the study will be strictly voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. If you would like to take part in the individual aspect of the study, please indicate this to your principal by April 7. As well, if you have any reservations or questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Joanne Tranter

Joanne Tranter
492-3840

CURRICULUM VITAE

Joanne C. Tranter
9503-83 Street, Edmonton, AB
T6C 2Z9
466-3720 (home) 492-6474 (office)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

1986-1987	Intern Teacher Kindergarten to Grade 5	Holyrood School Edmonton Public Schools
1987-1988	Supply Teacher Kindergarten to Grade 6	Edmonton Public Schools
1988-1991	Teacher Grades 1,2, and 4	Weinlos School Edmonton Public Schools
1991 - 1993	Coordinator Education (secondment) Challenger Learning Centre	Edmonton Space & Science Centre
1993 - 1994	Teacher Grades 3 to 6	Weinlos School Edmonton Public Schools
1994 - 1995	Graduate Assistant Teaching & Research	University of Alberta Elementary Education
1995 - 1996	Sessional Instructor (ED EL 370) and Practicum Facilitator	University of Alberta Elementary Education

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Education Major: Elementary Education Minor: Language Arts	1986 - University of Alberta Edmonton, Alberta
Masters of Science Educational Policy and Management Major: Instructional Leadership	1990 - University of Oregon Eugene, Oregon
Doctor of Philosophy in Elementary Education Major: Curriculum	1996 - University of Alberta Edmonton, Alberta

AWARDS & HONOURS

ATA Educational Trust Research Grant	1990
First Canadian teacher admitted to the *International Faculty of Space Science Educators*	1992
Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence in Science, Technology and Mathematics	1995
Canadian College of Teachers' *Encyclopedia Britannica Partnerships in Education Award, Honourable Mention*	1995
Professional Development Leave with remuneration granted by Edmonton Public Schools	1995-1996
ATA Educational Trust Research Grant	1995
Edmonton Public Schools Staff Merit Award Nominee (1994-1995)	1996

PROFESSIONAL PUBLICATIONS

1987. *Winter olympia.* Edmonton: Arnold Publishing.

1989. *Dragons and kites.* Edmonton: Arnold Publishing.

1990. A closer look at continuous learning. *ATA Magazine, 71*(3), 9-11.

1991. (with Paananen, N.) *Impact of continuity of programming on student self esteem.* Edmonton: Alberta Teachers' Association Educational Trust Fund.

1991. Reevaluating the sacred graded cow. *ATA Magazine, 72*(1), 16-18.

1992. The sacred graded cow II. *ATA Magazine, 72*(2), 32-36.

1992. *Please don't feed the PKU kids.* Edmonton: University of Alberta Hospitals, Department of Genetics.

1993. *Pheeny the phenylketosaurus.* Edmonton: University of Alberta Hospitals, Department of Genetics.

1993. Return to the moon. *The Alberta Science Teacher, 14*(3), 7.

1993. *Earth and beyond.* (Grades 7, 8, & 9). Edmonton: Edmonton Space & Science Centre, Edmonton Public Schools.

1993. *Earth and beyond.* (Grades 5 & 6). Edmonton: Edmonton Space & Science Centre, Edmonton Public Schools.

1995. *Marooned (revised edition).* (validator). Edmonton: Arnold Publishing.

1995. Taking the mystery out of report cards. *Creating Educational Excellence, 1*(1), 20-22.

1995. Make the most of your parent-teacher interview. *Creating Educational Excellence, 1*(1), 22.

1996. Referee for *Canadian Social Studies - The History and Social Science Teacher.* London, Ontario: University of Western Ontario.

1996. *Stories of Families Affected by Phenylketonuria.* Edmonton: Alberta Teachers' Association Educational Trust Fund.

CONVENTION & INSTITUTE WORK

Northern Alberta Teachers' Association Cold Lake, Alberta	*Continuous Learning* October, 1990
SISAC (Summer Institute on Student Assessment in the Classroom) Alberta Education and Alberta Teachers' Association Edmonton, Alberta	*The Challenger Learning Centre.... More Than Just a Field Trip !* August, 1992
North Central Teachers' Convention Edmonton, Alberta	*The Challenger Learning Centre* February, 1993
Greater Edmonton Teachers' Convention Edmonton, Alberta	*Teach and Reach for the Stars!* February, 1993

SISAC (Summer Institute on Student Assessment in the Classroom) Alberta Education and Alberta Teachers' Association Edmonton, Alberta	*The Challenger Learning Centre.... More Than Just a Field Trip !* August, 1993
North Central Teachers' Convention Edmonton, Alberta	*Marsville: The Cosmic Village* February, 1994
North East Teachers' Convention Edmonton, Alberta	*Space...the Learning Frontier!* February, 1994
Alberta Assessment Consortium Conference for Educators Edmonton, Alberta	*Sample Performance Based Tasks: Marsville the Cosmic Village* February, 1995
SISAC (Summer Institute on Student Assessment in the Classroom) Alberta Education and Alberta Teachers' Association Calgary, Alberta	*Marsville: The Cosmic Village* August, 1995
Convention of the Science Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association Jasper, Alberta	*Marsville: The Cosmic Village* October, 1995
Peace River District Professional Development Day Peace River, Alberta	*Earth & Beyond* and *Assessment and the Myth of the Electrolux* October, 1995
Assessing Student Performance: Connecting Learning and Teaching (Alberta Assessment Consortium Conference) Calgary, Alberta	*Assessment and the Myth of the Electrolux* November, 1995
Graduate Research Expo University of Alberta Edmonton, Alberta	*The Role of Educational Philosophy in the Selection of Curriculum Resource Materials: A Case Study (poster session)* February, 1996

8th International Organization of Science & Technology Education
Edmonton, Alberta

&Restructuring Schools With an Emphasis on Science - Implications of Policies & Practices That Foster Change (paper presentation) and *Marsville: The Cosmic Village (poster session)*
August, 1996

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS & COMMITTEES

Alberta Teachers' Association — 1986 to present

District Advisory Committee on Student Success
Edmonton Public Schools — Spring 1990

District Advisory Committee on Essential Learning Outcomes
Edmonton Public Schools — Winter 1991

District Advisory Committee on Performance Criteria
Edmonton Public Schools — Winter 1991

International Faculty of Space Science Educators
(formerly the NASA *Teacher in Space* program 1985-1986) — 1992 to present

Alberta Assessment Consortium
Team Leader — 1994 to present

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Canadian National Marsville — 1994-1996
Edmonton & area coordinator
Edmonton Space & Science Centre

1996 Agriculture Ambassador Fair — 1996
Education Judge
Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development